

ActionAid International
Taking Stock II – Synthesis Report
2004

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fighting poverty together



11th October 2004

Dear Colleagues

Greetings from Johannesburg. I am pleased to send you herewith shorter versions of the Taking Stock Review II 2004 (TSR2) reports together with the Management Response from the International Directors' Team.

Following the International Conference in Bangkok, these two documents formed the basis of discussions and decisions by the International Directors' team and the Board of Trustees in September. The TSR2 reports have now been formally signed off with a recommendation that they are read in conjunction with our Management Response. All the TSR2 reports will soon be uploaded onto our website in order to share them with others openly.

I feel that the external independent reviewers of the TSR2 have generally given us a clean bill of health in terms of the strategic direction and performance of the organisation with the exception of gender and women's rights where our inadequate performance has been sharply criticised. The reviewers have been hugely impressed by the quality and commitment of our staff and teams across the organisation. The reviewers' have made a number of other sharp observations and recommendations particularly in the areas of:

- Knowledge and capacity
- Partnership
- Communications
- Priorities and strategic resource allocation
- Staff work-life balance
- Working together across international, thematic and functional boundaries

I would like to draw your particular attention to the document 'Management Response to the Taking Stock Review II 2004', which is in effect mine and my team's commitment to address the issues and shortcomings related to our work and the organisation raised by TSR2. Our management response has been endorsed by the Board of Trustees. The Management Response will also be used in the process of developing and reviewing our international, regional, thematic and functional strategies in the coming months as well as in the process of reviewing our annual performance and progress.

In sending these documents, the shorter version of TSR2 reports and the Management Response, I am requesting you to share them with your staff and teams as well as present and discuss the content of the documents in the relevant forums and processes: management meetings, all staff retreats and country/regional/thematic/functional strategy development. Indeed, it will be useful to refer to these while you are now discussing the first draft of our international strategy.

Please send any queries, comments or suggestions you may have to Antonella Mancini (antonella.mancini@actionaid.org) in the Impact Assessment Unit.

Warm wishes

Ramesh Singh, Chief Executive, ActionAid International

Disclaimer

The information provided in the Taking Stock II reports is intended to take an honest look at ActionAid International's work against its global strategy *Fighting Poverty Together*. By doing so we hope to gain an open and frank insight into our organisation and the work that is being done. We have used reasonable endeavors to ensure that the information provided by the consultants in the report is accurate and reflects the integrity involved in having to discuss many faces of our work. These reports however are the views and opinions of the external consultants and do not necessarily represent an ActionAid International perspective and therefore should be read in conjunction with the management response to the review.

Introduction

ActionAid International's Accountability, Learning and Planning System (ALPS) requires, ActionAid International to carry out an independent review of its work at all levels every 3-5 years. From May - July 2004 ActionAid International did just this with the Taking Stock II process of reviewing *Fighting Poverty Together*. Assessing ActionAid International's work at the international level and how the sum of our work at the various levels adds up.

The findings from Taking Stock II are all documented in nine specific reports. The themes that the reports cover are Rights Based Approaches, Gender and Women's Rights, Reflections on AAI work, Organisational Development, Finance, ALPS review, Fundraising and Communications, and the AAI Stakeholder survey. The Taking Stock II consultancy team draws extensively from more recent country reviews taking place across ActionAid International's three regions and field visits to country programmes. It is important to note that the views presented are those of external consultants and the reports should be read in conjunction with the management response. These reports assess what is distinct about ActionAid International's work now compared to earlier work. They critically look at key issues and challenges within our work as well as what we have achieved as an organisation through our rights based programmes and actions.

We are proud of our achievements from the Taking Stock II review. And recognise from the findings the values and commitment we have shared together. In the adventures ahead it is certain that we will continue to contribute to the high standards that ActionAid International's team and partnerships set in fighting poverty together. The lessons and findings from the review should help guide the organisation as it embarks into the next phase of its' evolution - the internationalisation of ActionAid and the foundation of ActionAid International.

ActionAid International
**Taking Stock II - Management
Response**
2004

Management Response to Taking Stock Review II 2004

1. Introduction

An external Taking Stock Review (TSR2) of ActionAid International's work against its global strategy 'Fighting Poverty Together' (FPT) for the period 1999 – 2004 was carried out in the first half of January 2004. The main review team consisted of four persons: Kamla Bhasin, David Cohen (Team Leader), Alex Jacobs and Simon Matsvai. Irene Guijt, another external reviewer, reviewed our current Accountability Learning and Planning System (Alps) and worked closely with the main review team. Margaret Bennett reviewed the ActionAid UK marketing functions and provided technical input into a self-review of the fundraising and communications work of ActionAid International across the globe. An external stakeholder survey was carried out to gather independent views of various stakeholders.

The reviewers presented their individual reports and a summary of the external review was presented by Kamla Bhasin and David Cohen at the International Conference in Bangkok in July 2004.

This management response is a part of the process of follow-up of the TSR2 whereby the International Directors' Team, the international management team of ActionAid International have identified key issues emerging from TSR2. This response is based on inputs from International Directors but the interpretation, consolidation of inputs and the presentation in this form is done by the Chief Executive. This response in the current form and format has also been informed by the discussion in the International Directors' Meeting in September and has also been seen by the International Board of Trustees at their meeting in September.

The response is presented in three sections: an overview, gaps in terms of key issues not covered by TSR2 and the key issues from reviewers' observations and recommendations that we must address.

An Overview of the TSR2 results

The TSR2 generally commended our bold direction and strategy of FPT, our embracing the rights-based approach and various examples of specific successful results across many countries. Beyond the general vote of approval to what we have done and achieved, the inadequacy of our work and progress on women's rights and gender inequality was perhaps the biggest and the sharpest criticism from TSR2.

The TSR2 team were particularly impressed by the quality and commitment of our staff and team right across the board. There was a great deal of appreciation of the way we have brought about many structural changes in the organisation in line with the ambition of FPT.

On balance, the review focused a lot more on the country level work than on the international work and on how we are doing things than on what we are doing. The review findings, presented mostly in the form of observations rather than recommendations, have many explicit and implicit criticisms of various areas of work. Perhaps with the exception of our work on women's rights and gender which asks for fundamental changes in concept, strategies and implementation, the TSR2 points out criticisms and recommends that ActionAid International refines and deepens its strategies, approaches and investments without necessarily changing direction or track fundamentally.

The TSR2 scores ActionAid International quite low in following-up the recommendations of the TSR1 (1999) well and comprehensively as it finds itself repeating many of the observations and recommendations that were made by the earlier Taking Stock review.

Key gaps

With the benefit of hindsight, we now see a number of key gaps in terms of missed opportunities or things not covered and addressed in the TSR2 processes and results:

- An analysis and presentation of the external context of our work and the organisation would have made the TSR2 observations and reports much sharper
- A better and balanced attention to and interaction with our international structure, staff and programmes (themes and campaigns) would have provided a much fuller picture of the organisation as a whole.
- The TSR2 has made very few remarks about the content of our work (mission-related work) and has failed to provide us with any views of whether we should do different things as opposed to doing things differently. However, the Stakeholders Survey results provide a useful list of mission related issues that we should focus on in our future work.
- The human resource related systems, structure and issues are much less systematically addressed.
- The TSR2 has not covered the Trustees, Board and Governance issues as it is or has been over the period of the current FPT strategy and has provided no pointers to governance improvements in the organisation.

Response:

- With the exception of the issues related to governance, the discussions and deliberations in the International Conference in Bangkok compensated for the issues that were missed out by the TSR2.
- These issues will also be seriously pursued also during the process of drafting the new international strategy.
- Trustees, board and governance issues related to ActionAid International will need to be continually reviewed so that we can continue to learn and strengthen the boards and governance as ActionAid International evolves and develops.

Key issues to address

The TSR2 raised a large number of issues some more strategic and others more operational. Many of the issues raised can be clustered together into different bigger strategic issues. Following are key strategic issues (presented in no particular order) coming out of the TSR2 results and reports. Many of these have inter-linkages and overlaps. Beyond identifying the key issues, we also make an attempt to propose and commit to specific actions in response.

1. Women's rights, gender and patriarchy

The TSR2 appreciated the way that ActionAid International has prioritised gender equity as both a vertical as well as horizontal (cross-cutting) issue. The issues raised by the TSR2 are:

- Absence of conceptual clarity particularly about patriarchy and prevalence of limited understanding of gender which often neutralises the issues of power relationships between men and women and depoliticises the issue of women's rights and equality.
- The need to view poverty from the overarching framework of patriarchy instead of looking at gender from the framework of poverty. In other words, confirm that fighting patriarchy is a pre-requisite to fighting poverty.
- The massive gap in the investment and consequently the capacity of the organisation in terms of staff, skills and attitude.
- As a result of all this, ActionAid International has not had substantive, high quality and relevant programmes or partnerships whether organised vertically or horizontally as a cross-cutting work across other key programmes.

Response:

- Understand the concept of patriarchy better and incorporate it as one of the political analytical frameworks for defining and designing our work. Patriarchy as a wider and the primary framework for our thinking and work is not necessary.
- Ask the Strategy Drafting Team (SDT) to respond to the TSR2 observations and recommendations and ensure that a higher priority and clarity is accorded to women's rights work both as vertical and horizontal work in our new international strategy.
- Increase our investment in women's rights staff and structure as well as in the systematic capacity strengthening of all other staff across all functions and all levels but particularly those working on other themes so that the work for gender justice is mainstreamed in all our work.
- Invest in developing and strengthening women leaders and women's leadership in all parts of ActionAid International.

2. Partnership

The TSR2 appreciated ActionAid International's approach of developing and supporting partnership with a range of civil society organisations and movements. However, a number of important issues which are currently impeding the chances of getting maximum synergy and solidarity out of partnerships have been raised by TSR2. Partnership here, for our purposes, is understood as a relationship of joint work with pro-poor or poverty focused organisations, particularly peoples' organisations and civil society organisations.

- Dominance of fund and funding relationship which imposes ActionAid International's programmes and standards on partners
- Competition for building profile is stifling the potential for cooperation and collaboration
- Absence of strategic partnership at regional and international levels. General absence of clarity or strategy for partnership

Response

- Build a greater understanding of our current range of partners and our partnership practices through the completion of the 'partner census' on a regional basis that was started at the end of 2003.
- Highlight key partnership strategies in the new International Strategy.

- Develop and implement conceptual clarity, approaches and best practice guidelines for partnership with other organisation.
- While respecting and acknowledging others' contributions, it is important not to shy away for playing leadership role or highlighting the achievements honestly.
- The revised ALPS to have clear guidelines on partnership standards and accountability.
- Participation, accountability and transparency both in concept and practice to remain the cornerstone of our partnership with others.
- Systematic approach of exploring, connecting and developing key strategic partnership at the international level by the Chief Executive and the International Directors.

3. Communications

The TSR2 did not specifically focus on communications. The internal self-review of communications highlighted very low organisational investment and capacity for external communications. The TSR2, however, made the following two strong points which may, at face value, seem like an internal communications issue but they are perhaps much bigger external communications issue. It is obvious that internal clarity is a pre-requisite for any external communication.

- ActionAid International has a lot of stories to tell, stories of what it is doing, the changes it is bringing to the lives of many poor and marginalised people and communities and lessons learnt but it has not been able to do so in the relevant space or on the scale required.
- ActionAid International's identity and profile are varied but also conflicting (e.g. donor or donee, implementer or facilitator, partner of World Bank or partner of their strong critics, social movement or supporter of social movement, national or international).

Response

- The new International Strategy will clarify our key identity(ies) and the strategy roll out process will develop clarity and capacity of all parts of the organisation to express as well as use to the best effect our identity(ies) and profile(s).
- The creation of the new Communication and Public Affairs directorate will be strengthen together with an increased investment of communication staff and capacity at the regional and country levels.
- In addition to strengthening the communication function, staff and capacity, we will explore the mechanism for capturing, processing and promoting our experience, knowledge and ideas towards influence and change and ensure that voices of poor and marginalised people are conveyed and amplified.
- Also strengthen internal communications within the overall function of Organisational Effectiveness.

4. Capacity and quality: staff, knowledge, programmes

While the TSR2 has commended ActionAid International for taking a rights based approach to the eradication of poverty and injustice and for the quality and commitment of staff it has attracted, it has raised a number of issues pointing out the need to invest and strengthen our capacity to deliver the promises of FPT.

- There has been limited investment in ensuring adequate clarity of core concepts among the staff for deepening the rights based work and empowerment work promised by FPT.
- Staff and teams have limited clarity of various concepts (political education) such as patriarchy, human rights, equality, governance etc. and lack the necessary tools and methods for advancing rights based work.
- Skills and capacity for creating political space, building public constituency and discussions, strengthening networks and alliances are limited.
- ActionAid International does not have systems and mechanisms for assuring the quality and coherence of our mission related work and experience beyond the patches of excellence.
- ActionAid International currently lacks a systematic approach and mechanism for continually capturing, assessing, processing, packaging, promoting and scaling up of innovations, knowledge and ideas.

Response

- With the launch of the new International Strategy invest in a set of dedicated staff and structure that will broker and coordinate capturing, processing and promotion of our knowledge and ideas as well as training and education to ensure that the core capacity and competence for implementing the strategy is developed within the first 2 years.
- Prioritise, profile and strengthen mission related thematic work and the team so that the depth in capacity can be achieved.
- Develop strategic linkages and partnership with research, academic and think-tank institutions.
- Strengthen the system of staff capacity, competence and performance review and development.
- Strengthen the system of Trustee and Board capacity and performance review and development.
- Develop systematic mechanisms for ensuring that staff has opportunities for reflection and learning.
- Invest in leadership development.
- Our revised ALPS to include core measures of programme qualities and mechanism for programme quality assurance.

5. Work-life balance

The TSR2 has raised serious concerns about the ‘strong puritanical work ethic’ which expects staff to work long and unusual hours. Another related work culture that TSR2 raised was their concern about an overly busy and action-oriented work pattern. Such work ethic and culture is adversely affecting

- family and personal life of staff, particularly for women staff
- quality and sustenance of our work
- ability of staff and organisation to reflect, regenerate and innovate

Response

- Learn from the Asia region’s on-going action-research to understand all aspects and causes of the work-life imbalance and bring them into staff discussion and debate.
- Review current HR-OD policies and practices and develop both positive/promotional and protective HR-OD policies that will help staff, particularly women staff, have a healthy work-life balance.

- HR-OD policies, Shared-learning initiatives and the revised ALPS to systematically promote team and staff reflection for regeneration and innovation.
- Ensure that human resources plan commensurate with the work plan/load.

6. Resource Allocation

The TSR2 have raised both the broader aspects of resource allocations in terms of overall energy and attention of ActionAid International and also specifically about the financial resources.

- ActionAid International is working on many issues and doing too many things thus lacking focus and causing dissipation of energy. The impact of this is seen not only on the quality of our work in terms of our ability to influence and bring about change but also on our staff both professionally and personally.
- ActionAid International resource allocation and planning method and process is not transparent and is not integrated in any way with the strategic priorities of the organisation.

Response

- The issue of apparent lack of prioritisation and focus of our work is simply not a function of how many things we do but it also has the qualitative element in terms of how we conceptualise and organise very many things we do. The investment in conceptual clarity will strengthen our ability to see the linkages between and intersection of the variety of things we do and this will help in organising our work in a manner that will clearly express the hierarchy of priorities.
- Our planning, budgeting and reporting methods and systems will be improved to integrate financial resource allocation with the prioritised strategic objectives. All new CSPs as well as the new International Strategy will express priorities (thematic, geographical, groups of poor and marginalised people) and the linkages between strategic priorities and financial resource allocation.

7. Working Together

The TSR2 had a range of important comments about the way we are organised and related and work with each other internally. The following issues stand out:

- The TSR2 observed that staff are not tightly managed and internal decisions are political negotiations with high transaction costs and low predictability of response or results.
- ActionAid International is strongly vertically organised organisation with little incentive, system or practice for joint work across the boundaries between countries, or between themes, or between support functions and programme functions. This is the case not only between international and national entities but also within the countries.
- The role and quality of leadership of Country Directors with such a concentrated source of power is key to the success of the organisation. There is a need for improving the capacity and accountability (particularly downward accountability) of Country Directors towards a supportive and collaborative leadership style.
- There is an inadequate level of clarity and understanding about internationalisation in the organisation and staff are not yet able to internalise how they will be able to express or use the dual identity of being associated with the national as well as international organisations at the same time.

Response

- Through organisational policies, processes and practices we will strengthen the concept, system and practices of multiple accountability and matrix management.
- Through the revised ALPS we will strengthen the system for downward accountability of leaders and organisational entity across all parts of the organisation.
- Through the revised ALPS we will strengthen the system of joint and matrix planning, budgeting and reporting. In addition, also profile and resource thematic work and the teams in relation to geographical management and teams.
- Systematically discuss the issues of leadership style, quality and standards and incorporate the results to improve the current framework for Country Directors/Thematic Heads and support them with the necessary capacity strengthening inputs.
- Debate and develop frameworks, standards and programmes for new leadership development in ActionAid International.
- Immediately embark on a programme and process of knowledge sharing about internationalisation in those countries where the work on affiliate development is in progress. Then combined with the internal roll-out/launch of the new International Strategy, carry out the next wave of total knowledge sharing on internationalisation. Regional Directors with support from the Communications Director and Governance Coordinator to lead this process.

8th September 2004

ActionAid International
**Taking Stock II - Synthesis
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2004**

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international

ACTIONAID INTERNATIONAL: TAKING STOCK 2: 2004

SUMMARY REPORTS

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A. Introduction

This is a shorter version of all the Taking Stock Review II reports. This report has been produced by Laureen Bertin, a consultant editor together with support from the ActionAid International Chief Executive. The purpose of this report is to give ActionAid International Trustees and others a shorter and sharper version of various reports produced by the reviewers of the Taking Stock Review II (2004). A great deal of judgment has been used in reducing nearly 350 pages (excluding the Stakeholder Survey) of text to just under 40 pages without using any formatting tricks. The approach to producing this shorter version is presented in the following bullet points for reference:

- This is effectively a cut-and-paste report whereby editors have as much as possible refrained from rewriting or summarizing or paraphrasing and thus have kept the original text of the authors
- The reports are still left in the original individual 8 packages with only a very few transfer of text from one package to the other. However, the summary report by the TSR2 Team Leader has not been included in this package because the issues have largely been covered in the individual reports included here
- Only headline statements from the original reports are retained in the shorter versions thus removing explanations and examples
- Only statements that related to the observations and recommendations to ActionAid International and its work are retained thus removing general opinions on issues, which were not clearly related to AAI and its work
- As far as possible repetition of statements and topics from reports were eliminated.
- Attached as Annex 1 is a summary of the Stakeholder Survey 2004 written by Renee Kantelberg, Impact Assessment Unit

Please note that ActionAid International is hereinafter referred to as AAI

B. GENERAL

1. The Steep Climb of Fighting Poverty Together (FPT)

In evolving and accepting FPT as its official article of faith and policy, AAI has set its goals and standards very high. It is ambitious, brave and challenging to decide that AAI will, amongst other things:

- Fight poverty
- Fight the causes of poverty and not just its symptoms
- Fight poverty through partnerships
- Follow a rights-based approach, not charity or welfare approach
- Address gender inequalities as a central, cross-cutting issue
- Undertake policy and advocacy work.

These stated intentions require a transformation in policies, strategies, processes, analysis, methods of working, and relationships, and also a transformation in the mindset of AAI staff. For some teams, change was difficult, but in less than five years most teams were coping well, and rising to the challenges, with some doing better than others, often because of the vision, personality and commitment of the Country Director (CD)

Every team attempted the following with different degrees of conceptual understanding, organisational preparedness, commitment and success:

- Becoming a learning, changing and growing organisation;
- Restructuring country offices and development areas/projects (DAs), sometimes reducing the team by half (Kenya), sometimes doubling it (Italy);
- Evolving a gender policy and a policy against sexual harassment;
- Initiating discussion and action on a work life balance;
- Working WITH people rather than FOR them
- Becoming catalysts, supporters and advocates rather than direct implementers;
- Supporting existing Community Based Organisations (CBOs) and helping to create new ones, supporting efforts to plan and implement their own development initiatives rather than delivering services;
- Becoming advocates of people's rights and helping people to demand and fight for combining basic needs and a rights-based approach, with many projects that help women, men and children gain access to basic needs, livelihoods and services;
- Listening to people living in poverty and helping their voices reach policy-makers and decision-makers;
- Including women in most development initiatives and organisations and raising issues like violence against girls and women, women's land rights, women's participation in politics;
- Combining field level work and issues with policy level work and issues. Fieldwork provides the knowledge, authority and legitimacy to advocate on behalf of the oppressed, exploited, excluded and marginalised communities;
- Supporting and/or creating networks of CBOs and NGOs to negotiate with governments, big donors and international finance institutions;
- Making local government structures more responsive to people's needs and aspirations rather than replacing government structures. AAI insists that the State MUST continue to work for the "poor";
- Supporting thematic networks and fora at the local, national and international levels, to advocate for policy changes in areas like education, food rights, HIV/AIDS, trade, women's rights, rights of minorities;
- Initiating work on corporate responsibility;
- Engaging with the principles and processes of internationalisation and internalising this principle in their thoughts, work and aspirations;
- Publications such as Listening to People Living in Poverty, Good Governance, Economic Globalization Today, to educate and initiate debates:
- Using print and electronic media to raise people's issues, and to publicise innovative work being done

While there has been much innovation and experimentation by AAI and its partners, and a great deal of learning has taken place within AAI, some of it documented and shared, there are also many less than average programmes and partnerships.

2. “What is AAI trying to do?” and “How is AAI organised to do it?”

Their key conclusions are:

- At the community level, AAI delivers a mixture of service delivery and rights-based work, and at the national and international levels, an increasing involvement in advocacy work.
- AAI is not and cannot be a tightly managed organisation and relies on staff to use their own judgement, within certain parameters. At its best, this is put into practice through decentralised, empowering organisational structures which support high quality decision-making at the local level.
- AAI has taken significant and impressive steps to create these structures and support this way of working. One enabling factor (among many) has been the availability of unrestricted funds at the community level over the medium term provided by Child Sponsorship, but this is not consistent across the organisation, and there are risks involved.
- There is still some conceptual confusion in the organisation, particularly around the importance of decentralisation and the implications of fighting poverty together by changing structures of oppression rather than working on welfare issues.
- Staff are bound together by a shared commitment to AAI values rather than by management structures, so staff can be encouraged to work more responsibly through mechanisms including: developing their commitment to values, and values-based leadership within the organisation.

3. Impressive competence, engagement and commitment of AAI workers and teams

AAI staff uniformly showed qualities of competence, engagement and commitment, sensitivity and compassion, and contributed to the image of AAI as a serious and committed actor for people’s development and power. Most staff members have a sense of ownership of FPT and the values and strategies connected with it, and engage with their work confidently. While interaction may vary between offices, with some more formal or informal than others, there prevailed a sense of efficiency, competence, purpose and partnership, with staff open to reflection, dialogue and to positive and constructive criticism.

4. Some observations on AAI Campaigns for FPT

Campaigns are essential to take FPT forward, and most are well conceived, following a rights-based approach with an international perspective. Gender is addressed adequately in some and less adequately in others. Policy and strategy papers on AAI campaigns, while of high quality, are mostly not written in an accessible manner, and it is unlikely that all AAI staff understand them. This applies also to the communities that AAI serves, who should have easy access to such information.

There is also a concern that AAI spreads itself too thin and should consolidate those campaigns where it has expertise and has made some progress. The implications should also be thought through before the campaign commences. There are also concerns with gender integration, and with the partnerships that are inevitably required for campaigns.

5. Partnerships for FPT

AAI’s new approach is to build partnerships to fight poverty and various partnerships are being formed from the local to the global level, including local CBOs, NGOs, schools, youth groups, local government departments, national governments, networks, alliances, bilateral and multilateral donors, and UN agencies.

This kind of globalization of people to fight poverty, injustice and war is the only answer to the neo-imperialist globalization. The efforts being made are many, serious and commendable.

6. Partnerships are not without problems

Creating genuine and equal partnerships is always a challenge, and problems with AAI partnerships at all levels were in evidence.

6.1. Partnerships within AAI

While intra-organisational partnerships are most important to carry forward the mandate of any organisation, tensions included a hierarchical reporting style; the power of some Country Directors; and the imposition of the new vision, mission and objectives of FPT on the field level staff. There was also a limited understanding of the campaigns.

6.2. Money Based Partnerships with CBOs and NGOs

Funding relationships can create hierarchies, and while most partners were appreciative of their partnership with AAI, some felt that AAI imposes rigid financial reporting systems, which to some implied a lack of trust. There was also a lack of equality in deciding on campaigns and new approaches.

6.3. Partnerships with other like minded resource agencies

When organisations in the same countries have to compete for funds, the sense of competition becomes stronger than the sense of partnership. In many countries, there is little collaboration between donors at the local/district level, with several donors working in the same area, on the same issues without any co-operation. At the national level they are part of the same fora, but not at the local level, where co-operation would make a big difference.

6.4. Partnerships in campaigns

While AAI repeatedly states that the success of campaigns depends on genuine, strong and equal partnerships at all levels, local, national and international, it often focuses on profiling itself rather than the partnership. There is often a sense of competition rather than co-operation and partnership with others working on the same issues, which mitigates against maximization of benefits or creation of synergies to make advocacy more effective. Many AAI activities were commented upon as contradicting the stated AAI value of humility and its principles of partnership and internationalisation. Since FPT cannot be achieved without partnerships, more work is required on partnerships and power at the conceptual and practical level.

7. Development of human potential neglected in AAI

A goal-oriented organisational culture leaves little time for reflection and analysis. There is a greater emphasis on “hard capacities” (accounts, IT management) than on “soft capacities” which have to do with practising and promoting values like rights, pluralism, gender, equality and empowerment.

Kenya and India have effective programmes for building financial capacity in AAI internally and its partners, with capacity-building accountants implementing the “Zero Tolerance to Corruption Policy”, and this model could be used to audit rights, gender equality etc.

The AAI view of accountability seems to be mainly financial, with little understanding of and investment in building accountability systems for the main values and principles and the main objectives of a rights-based approach, gender equality, building partnerships, advocacy.

8. What is/should be the identity of AAI?

Is AAI a donor or an activist NGO, a Northern or a Southern NGO, taking positions itself or helping others to take a position? Should AAI support movements or is it part of movements? Organisations do not have one, fixed identity, but are often fluid. Some of the AAI identities include: northern and southern (after

internationalisation) organisation; donee and donor; facilitator and implementor (activist/actor); direct implementation/action and partnership with networks and alliances; service delivery and rights based approach; partner of government or the World Bank and their strong critics.

These multiple identities may also be in conflict with each other – for example, being both a foreign donor and an activist may not always work, and in such situations AAI has to make strategic choices.

It is important to recognise and appreciate these multiple and fluid identities and also learn to deal with them sensitively.

9. Is AAI a supporter of movements or a part of movements?

A broad definition of a movement is a whole spectrum of conscious and unconscious, individual or collective acts, activities, groups or organisations concerned with any issue i.e. gender, caste, class, ethnicity, race, environment.

Movements are not static, but are processes which are modified as they come in contact with everyday life and realities, confronting power hierarchies.

Different people and organisations can be located at different points and perform different roles, in a movement - some may act at the local level, others at the global; some may do research, others may do street action.

Based on this understanding of a movement and looking at the AAI vision, mission and objectives, AAI is indeed part of many movements globally, movements for human rights, economic, social and cultural rights, gender equality, peace, ecology, secularism etc. playing different roles in these movements at different locations and times.

Ownership or projection of identities is a problem in movements, and there have been complaints of AAI projecting itself, rather than the cause or movement. Similar complaints are heard about many organisations. Such power struggles – sometimes necessitated by funding/reporting requirements - have led to splintering of many movements/networks/alliances. Issues of power are ongoing and require constant attention and vigilance.

10. Should organisations focus on changing individuals or institutionalising change?

The importance of people cannot be overstated, and they play a major role in shaping organisations. AAI has attracted many such people to its fold, and it is the ir work which appears highlighted in a sea of below average ideas, projects and performances. Such exceptional people are allowed the space to innovate and experiment, but the danger is that they may become arbitrary and unaccountable to the overall values of the organisation. Mechanisms can be developed to minimise these problems, institutionalising changes and ensuring that the organisational agenda is owned by everyone in the organisation. Institutionalising change requires taking people along, building close partnerships between different sections, building HR/OD capabilities and systems.

11. Any contradictions between being a multinational NGO corporation (MNgoC) and FPT (aspirations)?

Ambitious visions and policy statements challenge us deeply. The good thing is that these challenges are self-imposed, and emanate from our commitment to justice, equality, pluralism and other human values. The question is whether AAI staff, in positions of power within AAI can fight poverty when we ourselves are from the powerful segments of class, caste, race, gender, and North-South power hierarchies, without transforming ourselves, our life styles, consumption patterns.

Transformation often takes place in the wrong way, with high salaries and perks, and consumerist lifestyles that become an impediment to FPT, effectively replicating exactly those caste, class, race, and gender hierarchies

inside the organisation, which we want to fight in the outside world. In order to become more effective, AAI then takes money from or begins working in partnership with those development agencies generally held responsible for perpetuating poverty and class, race, North-South hierarchies.

Work styles and working hours perpetuate gender division of labour and make it impossible for NGO workers to combine work and family life. Gender balance in their own lives and families is sacrificed for FPT.

Is it possible to sell revolution, and taken to its logical end, FPT is revolutionary, through advertising and PR firms to people with surplus cash, made possible by colonialism and neo imperialism? FPT and gender equality are in the final analysis about dismantling power structures, but our organisations themselves become structures of power, perpetuating class, caste, race, gender, North-South, we-other, hierarchies.

C. RIGHTS BASED APPROACH

1. The AAI Rights Based Approach

The evolution of AAI's work from a relief and service-based organisation to a Rights Based Approach (RBA) is well-established, and positions AAI to play an active and important role in challenging the growing poverty and inequality in the world.

In this effort AAI is not a sole actor, or even most of the time the most well-known initiator, but rather a reliable organisation with special and ongoing contributions to offer, that will strengthen a community of practitioners who draw their political strength and legitimacy from their development, human rights and social mobilisation work, rooted in communities and crossing international boundaries.

2. What Is a Rights Based Approach

A rights based approach is founded on the conviction that each and every human being, by virtue of being human, is a holder of rights. A right entails an obligation on the part of government to respect, promote, protect and fulfill it. A rights based approach involves not charity or simple economic development, but a process of enabling and empowering those not enjoying their economic, social and cultural rights to claim their rights.

A Rights Based Approach requires a political set of strategies and with it the tools to compete effectively by engaging in the world of ideas, not through think tanks but by connecting the work of development with human rights work and social movement building and strengthening. It challenges the framework of the neo-liberals who influence decision-makers.

In operational terms it means understanding the difference between a right and a need. A right "provides a normative framework of obligations that has legal power to render governments accountable." Needs are also legitimate but they are aspirations. Without diminishing their importance, aspirations and obligations by the government do not go together in a mutually enforceable manner, and the "satisfaction of a need cannot be enforced."

3. Positioning AAI for a Sustained Rights Based Approach

AAI's main contribution to advancing a Rights Based Approach is that it is rich in experience and has had an important effect on improving people's lives. The lives of people have been improved in ways that would not have happened without AAI's presence.

Political space has to be negotiated and won. Analytical skills and capacities are central to making an RBA work for the people struggling to realise their rights. Operationally what this means is that capacity building and ongoing strengthening is a necessity in fulfilling the attainment of all rights.

The AAI approach to programmatic partnering is particularly useful in advancing a Rights Based Agenda, strengthening those who will organise, build the constituencies, foster the confidence of people who have long been denied rights the confidence, skills, knowledge and attitude to engage with powerful institutions who resist or drag their feet on fulfilling the progressive realisation of rights. It is AAI as an enabler and catalyst.

4. Overall Organisational Strategies for AAI and a Rights Based Approach

AAI has responsibilities at the international and country levels, and is part of something larger than itself as a development organisation that now advances human rights and connects to social movements. Its values and passions are about creating lives of equality for all and addressing hard problems that deal with political, economic, social and cultural power, and a hunger exists among staff members to advance their understanding, knowledge and skills to do policy work with those that they serve and relate to.

5. Internationalisation

AAI's work flows from its values and the various organisational divisions of AAI (fundraising and communications) should serve those values which are drawn from the organisation's work internationally and in the countries it works in. AAI at the country and international levels must have the organisational capacity to understand and convey the systemic and structural causes of inequality with action plans that address them, and improve its communications in advancing equality. AAI in Johannesburg should be equipped to deal with critical common issues, including budget analysis, expenditures and revenues, gender quality, transparency including right to information, NGO-government relations, institutionally embedded corruption, HIV/AIDS and food security. Tools of power analysis and mapping should be part of each country's programme, as it unravels race, class, gender, caste and ethnicity and their influence on creating cultures of submissiveness and silence or high risk for challenging the powerful.

6. Power

Constant attention and energy must be focused on those parts of the society that are less powerful and invariably more marginalised. The creation of political and public space is thus critical for the exchange of ideas and practices that will add to the ways of challenging substantially unequal power relationships, opportunities to influence public policies and their implementation and undertaking social audits to examine what has improved, stayed the same or worsened for poor people. Should the efforts always focus on the poorest of the poor, those most marginalised and least powerful? Or is it important to engage with parts of civil society and other interest groups who may not necessarily have the poor as their top priority but are in a position to influence and affect social change and have the power to direct that change and sustain it?

7. How should AAI's public work be conducted with itself and those with whom it partners?

It is recommended that AAI:

- Draw on its sources of power to create change, and understand history and culture
- Always make the organisation and partnership people -centered around policies and participation
- Build public support by conducting public discussion and public argument. Create public and political spaces for people to discuss and debate
- In building public support, engage policy making systems at all levels of governance, and identify the attitudes, knowledge and skills needed to engage the policy system

8. Progressive Realisation of Human Rights

This is a way of establishing benchmarks within a country, addressing the question of why countries even in conflict situations, or those just emerging from them, should move forward with RBA no matter how difficult the circumstances. In advancing RBA choices, the question is whether AAI can continue to undertake service activities. A different choice is to pursue programmatic partners who undertake the organising with advice and technical assistance from AAI. Such service providers are in a position to be perhaps the best sources of information to advance an RBA and improve people's lives. If it chooses not to for strategic political reasons, then it must find ways to ensure that the voices of the poor, and their political and programmatic priorities, stay at the centre.

9. Matters to be Intentional About

In observing the organisational culture of AAI, it seems that substantive learning takes place by osmosis. Anecdotes help people have understanding. There are many meetings which contribute to a healthy cross-fertilisation of ideas and experiences, build relationships and encourage cross-cultural communication. AAI staff accept internationalisation in principle, but there is a lack of knowledge about what it means as an idea and operationally, and a common understanding is needed. Country Directors should indicate what strategies they will undertake to advance RBA, using the systemic problems within the country as a starting point.

10. Cultural Constraints

Being intentional requires addressing cultural constraints, which are a serious impediment to the work of AAI on the ground, where a culture of silence, submissiveness and patriarchy often makes the implementation of RBA difficult. Just as failure to attain a “progressive realisation” of human rights is not acceptable in advancing RBA, so is letting cultural constraints go by without their being addressed.

11. Language

The use of language as a social change factor requires attention. In an organisation such as AAI, with its rich history and culture, there is a danger that shorthand and acronyms substitute for what AAI wants to convey. A Rights Based Approach requires language filled with active verbs such as initiate, innovate, invent, and which convey agency and not dependency.

12. International Organising: Capacity Strengthening, Horizontal, Sub-Regional

The internationalisation of AAI provides a special opportunity to think in ways of organising for a global organisation, that will address capacity strengthening, horizontal work and sub-regional actions, and which may begin to address the inequalities that are so deeply felt and understood within the organisation.

13. Matters that Merit Active Consideration

13.1. Financial and Marketing Systems and Culture

A powerful message is “zero tolerance for organisational corruption”. AAI is an active and protective steward and trustee of the organisation’s funds. In a social change organisation, such as AAI, each department should contribute its skills and knowledge in raising funds. Programme people in any active organisation have a specific responsibility to help raise funds as a collective organisational responsibility.

13.2. Management Systems

A common theme in country reports and strategy papers was the limited time available for reflection, both individually and organisationally. There is also a limited institutional memory in AAI, and given the volume and extent of work that takes place around social change, there are valuable experiences and information that may be lost.

13.3. REFLECT

The REFLECT process is a powerful tool for understanding and sustaining social change and it is both under-utilised, and its use is inconsistent and limited.

13.4. Innovations

Every country has nuggets of innovation - policy, organisational, -that are part of what people do but do not flow into the AAI system. A smart management system would find ways to capture innovations, make them understandable within the organisation, decide the different areas that can be covered, and recognise them within the organisation so that others can apply or adapt them.

For a large organisation to think in terms of innovations further reinforces its position as a learning organisation, and demonstrates that there is room for fresh ideas and approaches. The other aspect of innovations, as is true with various organisational learning methodologies and processes, is that these should be communicated to AAI supporters and contributors, and the language of RBA is essential, with a constant emphasis on women’s equality, and what that means for children.

13.5 Organising

The connection between development, human rights and social movements is held together by ongoing attention to organising, understanding its power, respecting the energy that it requires and constantly learning from what is occurring.

13.6. Right to Information

Knowledge is power but only if knowledge is created. The use of information is central to creating the necessary public and political space to organise the discussion, or if need be, the argument to advance RBA. Information that is carefully and creatively organised tells a story that otherwise would not be told, and places critical policy matters into a frame that can be heard and acted on.

13.7. Structured Networks

Structured networks are about organising in the modern age of electronic communications, but are not a substitute for the necessary one-on-one organising to build community power. Structured networks, while often informal, carry their own responsibilities for the participants, and are particularly useful in horizontal connectivity and in sub-regional and trans-national efforts, moving away from the hierarchies of command and control that are often common in issue-based campaigns including those involving social movements.

13.8. Sustenance

There is a strong puritanical work ethic, with staff often expected to work long and unusual hours, making work at AAI hard on family and personal life. This affects women even more harshly. The high level of commitment uniformly exemplified by AAI staff is to be valued, but attention must be paid to sustenance activities, to value them and to recognise that sustenance is an essential part of doing effective rights work.

13.9. Leadership

Even in situations - and there are many - where AAI is making an ongoing difference, the idea of leadership was not acknowledged or recognised, and no discussion on leadership occurred where risks were taken. This avoidance may in part be attributed to thinking of leaders in hierarchical power terms. Others shun leadership because it moves away from equality, yet leadership is a necessary quality of social change, and needs to be understood in its different dimensions.

If leadership, like power, is relational, collective and purposeful - driven by values, belief and mission - then the focus is not on the leader but on the processes of leadership, the acts of leadership and the public aspects and work of leadership. That requires understanding the social system that the group, or the community, operates in.

14. Looking Ahead

It is also important to consider what steps can be taken to advance the whole organisation towards societal equality within countries, within regions and between the south and the north, working to eliminate poverty worldwide and adding to the ongoing efforts to make human rights the norm in people's lives everywhere.

Country Directors need workable plans that make a realistic effort to advance RBA, women's equality, the elimination of poverty and having human rights established as a norm within their country.

AAI should aim always to create an adventure in social action that crosses borders and other boundaries. This happens by creating stories, exchanging views, being culturally aware, learning, networking, mentoring and enjoying the robustness and zest of initiating social action and challenging power. It demands reflection, and an open-mindedness that initiates, invents and innovates, and lives the life of social action to the fullest.

D. GENDER

There is no shortage of critical reflection and questioning within AAI, with many aware of AAI's weaknesses, shortcomings and of the actions required to set them right. They also do not hesitate to articulate their views in meetings and in their writings. Most annual reports do not forget to mention weaknesses and failures. There is an openness and honesty about recognising shortcomings. Earlier reviews have also been very good, perceptive and candid. Therefore, most of our observations, questions and suggestions are echoes of existing thinking.

1. Observations, questions and suggestions on AAI work for achieving gender equity

Here are some aspect of progress AAI has made in this period of review:

- Gender goals centrally located in fighting poverty together strategy
- A comprehensive gender policy in place
- A policy against sexual harassment in place
- Attempts to have work life balance and family friendly policy
- Special HR/OD measures for the recruitment of women
- Some gender co-ordinators, focal points and gender working groups in place
- Gender issues integrated in marketing, development education and media work
- Incorporation of gender in ALPS, REFLECT, Stepping Stones
- Gender-related capacity-building of staff have been undertaken
- Many projects for and with women
- Empowering girls through education
- Working with women and girls to challenge violence
- Support to girls and women to fight for their rights
- Using laws to empower girls and women
- Building capacities of local CBOs and NGOs on gender issues
- Building alliances for gender equality
- National and international programmes and campaigns on gender issues
- The integrated approach has successfully pushed the women's rights agenda

2. Observations, questions and suggestions on the conceptualisation of gender in AAI

While FPT has placed gender prominently on the AAI agenda, there is a need for a clear conceptual understanding to be formulated with effective and focussed strategies.

2.1. Ghettoisation of gender

Gender concerns are not appropriately incorporated into the broad work of AAI, with the use of terms like poor, people, households, communities being used which render women and their concerns invisible. AAI has declared gender to be a cross-cutting issue, and the policies therefore require clear disaggregation of such terms to ensure that gender is not ghettoised. "Gender" continues to mean "women" to most people in AAI. Gender is also largely absent or ghettoised in most AAI documents except in the special reviews on gender work.

Many senior managements defer the topic of gender to other staff, such as gender co-ordinators or HR staff, there is on the other hand a limited commitment to appointing dedicated staff to do gender work. Only in Vietnam and Brazil are the gender co-ordinators included in the Management Committee, while in other countries they are seldom mainstreamed into decision-making fora.

2.2. Absence of in-depth and clear analysis on gender subordination

There is little in-depth analysis of gender subordination or inequalities, and no mention of patriarchy in AAI documents. Since patriarchy is the system responsible for creating gender inequalities, can causes of gender inequality be addressed without even naming the system, analysing it and understanding its origin? Private

property, family and religion are the pillars of patriarchy (and of class and caste, for that matter) and underpin the system going, yet there is little analysis, and no strategies or campaigns to address this.

2.3. Gender inequalities seen only in the context of poverty

AAI policy presents gender as a problem only in relation to poverty, which again serves to entrench organisational and class inequities, in a sense relegating it to the level of a North-South issue. It is necessary that AAI clearly states that patriarchy is a global system, that subordination of women is universal, although the nature and extent of it can be different from place to place and time to time.

2.4. Conceptual confusion around the term gender

Gender is the social definition of women, men, girls and boys which determines their dress, roles, responsibilities, rights, control over resources, mobility, and aspirations and everything else. Gender is also a neutral term, implying neither equality nor inequality. It is not a struggle concept and that is why it has depoliticised feminist agendas. Conceptual clarity, at all levels, is necessary; if structural changes are necessary then the desire not to offend anyone, in this case men if they dominate, exploit, abuse or violate must be removed. The language of the FPT document on gender is both confused and confusing, subscribing to the discredited theory of harmonious households and communities, where it is now widely accepted that it is more the conflict-co-operation model which operates in real life.

2.5. Men and masculinities not analysed and challenged

Given that gender power relations are hierarchical and exploitative, is it possible to address patriarchy by always including men and boys in empowering women? AAI must avoid the depoliticisation of women's struggles, and using the concept of patriarchy assists this by naming the oppressor and the oppressed. If AAI can clearly take sides with the poor, why hesitate to take sides equally forcefully with women and girls amongst the poor communities? Men and boys have also to realise how patriarchy has deprived many of them of positive human qualities like nurturing, caring, gentleness.

3. Some observations, questions and suggestions on the operationalisation of gender

The following observations, questions and reflective comments are being made to initiate forward-looking dialogues and reflections to improve the work in progress at AAI.

3.1. Lack of clarity on gender concepts, issues and debates

Clarity and shared understanding on concepts and issues is an absolute prerequisite for having commitment to gender equity and equality and for developing effective strategies and programmes to achieve women's empowerment and gender equality.

3.2. Doubts about mainstreaming OR dedicated gender staff and programme

Some senior managers continue to say that because gender is a cross-cutting issue it should be mainstreamed, and there is no need for dedicated staff for gender. Mainstreaming is a difficult and time-consuming process requiring dedicated staff and resources.

3.3. Lack of understanding and discussion on patriarchy and feminism

In almost every country programme, discussions on power and hierarchy between women and men are avoided, and this fear of alienating men and confronting power relations must be addressed if AAI wants to achieve gender equality. Feminist struggles have been and should be context specific, just as struggles against poverty are, and maintaining partnerships with feminist organisations and movements is necessary.

3.4. Challenging patriarchy is neither easy nor instant

Patriarchy is deeply entrenched almost everywhere; in all modern religions, in societal institutions including the family and in the psyche of most human beings. Challenging the deep, pervasive structure and ideology of patriarchy is not easy, so including it as a goal in FPT will help. Changing gender relations requires changing

ourselves as individuals and as organisations. Simply making policies and statements does not advance this work.

3.5. Few at the top are championing gender

Within an organisation as hierarchical as AAI, for the gender agenda to make headway, people at the top need to champion it, and this is not happening. Without exception, most country and strategy presentations ignored gender policy and gender concerns.

3.6. In AAI, gender is an issue OF, BY and FOR women

Most (not all) champions for women's rights and gender equality are women, and gender activities are mainly of, by and for women. Gender is understood by many as an equivalent of women and little else, and these perceptions must be dispelled.

3.7. Disrespect for those responsible for gender: its rare but there

While gender concerns appear to be well-integrated, there are senior AAI staff who appear to have little respect for those working in the area of gender. Of greater concern was the fact that one such individual was in fact a prominent member of the Gender Working Group at the country programme level.

3.8. Totally inadequate staff for achieving gender equity

AAI has over 2 000 staff with thousands of CBOs, NGOs, government departments and others, and has only ONE full-time position on gender at the international level, with little logistical or administrative support, and only eight country programmes have one full-time gender person each.

3.9. Gender staff not part of senior management

Neither at the international nor at the country level (except in Vietnam and Brazil) is the person in charge of gender also part of the Senior Management Team. Most of the strategic thinking and decision-making happens at this level, but with the absence of the gender person in this forum, gender may or may not be taken into account in the decisions made on policies, strategies, programmes, budgets, staffing. Previous recommendations that gender staff should be moved up the hierarchy have obviously not been taken seriously.

3.10. Inadequate efforts for perspective and team building on gender, power and rights

It is people who make organisations, and if people are neither clear nor personally committed, little can be achieved. While building the perspectives and capacities of the staff on rights and gender issues is essential, many staff have never participated in a gender workshop. Training in gender is often done by inexperienced people, resulting in a lack of shared understanding and perspectives.

3.11. Identification and/or creation of good gender trainers

Good gender trainers with a feminist, rights and pluralistic perspective are as rare as they are needed, and it would be useful to identify them and work with them at a regional and international level to create solid learning opportunities on gender for potential trainers and others.

3.12. Dearth of good educational materials on gender

There were few educational materials on gender that were interesting, attractively produced, and written in accessible language. Basic documents on gender should be produced and provided to everyone in an organisation, and utilising resources to produce good educational materials for AAI staff and its partners would be a worthwhile investment.

3.13. Gender work with communities does not challenge structures of inequality

Most "gender" programmes at community level are women's programmes. However, the existing gendered division of labour is not challenged, and remains exploitative of women, in most projects perpetuating the patriarchal power structures. Next level issues to be addressed include structures and relationships of power between men and women, rich and poor, majority and minority groups, urban, rural, government servants, etc. A

deeper understanding is needed of concepts and issues related to gender, rights, power and power relationships, gender division of labour, rewards, resources, decision-making.

3.14. Gender concerns missing in many campaigns

Gender concerns are not integrated into AAI campaigns, and even the education campaign may be reinforcing patriarchal bias. If, for example, one is concerned about gender equity and equality in education, then it is not enough just to ensure that girls attend school; the quality of the education must be examined, as must the environment, such as issues of violence against girls, violence by men (teachers) and boys; attitudes, behaviour, household responsibilities and looking after younger siblings..

3.15. Need for closer collaboration within AAI

Closer links should be established within AAI, between people and programmes on gender, human rights and HIV/AIDS, sharing values, principles, issues and perspectives. Increased staffing is needed for this to happen, and it may be that funds can be raised through AAI offices in the north to support such work.

3.16. Partnership with organisations and women's movement

Rather than diverting resources to start up its own activities and networks on sexual harassment, trafficking, FGM, violence against women and girls (VAWG), AAI could strengthen ongoing or potential networks of women's organisations. On gender issues AAI should not hesitate to be seen as a junior partner relative to other organisations who have been in feminist struggles for longer.

3.17. Need for strengthened regional and international co-operation

Using the advantage of being an international organisation, AAI could support and/or initiate regional and international co-operation and campaigns, as it did in Asia on trafficking. Every region has existing networks whom AAI could partner with.

3.18. Patriarchal virus deadlier than HIV

There seems to be little appreciation in AAI, as in most other development organisations, that the harm done by gender inequalities is no less "deadly" than, for example, the harm done by HIV/AIDS.

Patriarchy deprives women of all their rights, including the right to participate in public life as citizens. Projects being implemented by AAI will provide for some women basic education, a little "micro" credit and profit, some cleaner water; but they will not provide equality, dignity, human rights, unless radical structural changes are fought for and achieved.

3.19. FPT should continue, BUT with one more "P" in it?

In response to the question of whether AAI continue with FPT, it was felt that FPT takes time to implement, and AAI is only now incorporating the concepts of RBA, gender perspectives, partnerships and campaigns. Issues of poverty, gender inequalities and rights abuses remain so the goals and principles of FPT may need to be reformulated but not discarded. It must, however, include P for Patriarchy, since the majority of the world's poor are women, who are the most exploited, oppressed and excluded amongst the exploited, oppressed and excluded communities. Fighting poverty and the processes of impoverishment therefore requires fighting patriarchy also.

3.20. What about making gender a hub of all AAI activities?

Because most concerns of AAI can be addressed through gender work, gender can be an effective hub of all AAI activities.

E. FUNDRAISING

The style of the Fundraising Taking Stock 2004 at all levels is 'self-assessment'. The process, information gathering and report structuring and editing has been led by consultants, but the contents are totally the work of the AAI country and regional fundraising teams, in their own words.

1. AFRICA

There has been no voluntary fundraising taking place in Africa for country programmes, although Kenya does assist partners to raise voluntary income for their own work. There are no plans to develop voluntary fundraising in Africa, although the recent establishment of the AAI Secretariat office in South Africa could be the impetus to begin such fundraising in the region.

Clarity is needed on whether the Region will be engaged in voluntary fundraising for AAI in the future and what kind of assistance will be available for this work.

2. AMERICAS

The USA is the only country in which AAI raises voluntary income, but the successes of the past have been severely affected by the drop in funding within the majority of US foundations due to declining stock market returns and prevailing economic instability. There have, however, been some fundraising successes in the US which have been based on developing partnerships with priority US foundations:

Capacity is severely constrained, with only one person working on foundations fundraising in the USA; one person in Brasil and one person in Guatemala. USA and Brasil are the main markets for fundraising at present. Guatemala and Haiti have limited opportunities to fundraise in their markets.

In Brasil, there are challenges presented by the traditional vision of social investment organisations prioritising short-term projects related to basic needs (food security, health, education); instead of empowering and advocating for the fulfillment of basic rights. There is also the question of Third Sector competitiveness for funds.

Challenges being experienced in the USA include a lack of strong communication and co-ordination across AAI; limited skills in proposal writing, report writing, and knowledge of the US fundraising environment; and limited relationships with key funders.

3. ASIA

Funds from voluntary sources in Asia have been raised from Hong Kong, India, Singapore, Japan, Malaysia and Vietnam. A total of £60,000 raised in Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan and Malaysia through Global Major Donor Programme in 2003. There are a lot of active UK supporters/donors living in the above-mentioned Asian countries.

The Majority of voluntary income has come from India through unsolicited donations to emergency situations together with some trust income. India has also been actively soliciting funds from individuals since 2002. They have also launched a donor loyalty programme called 'Karma Mitra' and have already recruited 3000 individual supporters in 2004. The total number of fundraising staff has increased from 1 in 2002 to 9 in 2003 signifying increased efforts in in-country fundraising.

India and Afghanistan have also been able to acquire funding directly from national government channels.

There is significant potential for expansion of fundraising particularly in India and in other Southeast Asian countries including those above mentioned countries where UK supporters live and also in Thailand. However,

inadequate market research, capacity of staff, building an integrated marketing team, availability of attractive projects for the major donors and building brand identity are some of the challenges faced in the period.

4. EUROPE

Within Europe, coverage focuses on the 4 main ActionAid International countries, namely Greece, Ireland, Italy and the United Kingdom.

Voluntary income has grown in Europe from €55.2 million to €83.7 million between 2000 and 2003 – a growth of 28%. Greece has consistently increased income by around €1 million each year, following a steady investment in recruiting child sponsors. Income has almost trebled in the 3 year period. Ireland income has remained static (a decline in real terms) due to significant limitations on investment available until 2003. Italy has increased income by around €3m a year - again due to a steady investment in child sponsorship. UK has produced a steady growth in income of 14%, during a period which has been difficult for fundraising in this highly saturated market. For this very developed programme, the main focus has been on cutting staff and overheads to improve net income, on increasing unrestricted income, and on broadening the fundraising portfolio to manage risk. When all direct costs, staff costs and overheads (except for ActionAid Italy) are taken into account, total net income has grown from €52.7 million to €65.7 million, a growth of 25%.

To support Fighting Poverty Together, the UK has made increasing general funds a top priority, and has pursued a strategy of a) moving child sponsors on to The Next Step after 5 years (a country unrestricted product) and b) recruiting 30,000 new general fund regular givers. The UK now has 69% of its total voluntary income as either general fund or country unrestricted income.

Overall, levels of committed giving are very high – largely a reflection of the child sponsorship mechanism, but also promoted strongly through other committed giving schemes such as FPT regular giving in the UK, Global Citizen in Greece, and Azione Donna and Amico Paese in Italy

UK has a wide range of fundraising sources, and has been focusing on diversifying since 2001, in particular the development of major donor giving. Legacies, trusts and corporate fundraising remain relatively under-developed, although they too are a focus for development.

Ireland and Greece remain largely dependent on sponsorship income, although both have plans to develop a wider fundraising portfolio in the next 3 years if investment funding is available. Ireland will be looking at legacies, major donors and payroll giving, and Greece will be developing events, corporate fundraising, community fundraising and new regular giving products.

Fundraising challenges have included non-compliance with donor requirements; a donor preference for service delivery projects rather than advocacy projects; increased competition for funds; no comprehensive portfolio of AAI projects so that potential donors can make choices; inadequate feedback to donors about the projects they support.

Corporate fundraising

With regard to fundraising from companies and corporates, there is a lack of clarity about whether or not AAI wants to accept money from companies a) at all b) donations only c) cause-related sponsorships. There must be a clear international policy, which defines the role of companies/the private sector in Fighting Poverty Together.

With regard to restricted fundraising, AAI has no process for providing a prioritised portfolio of projects and this is severely hampering major donor and trust fundraising development around the world.

New country unrestricted money has exacerbated the situation, with offices providing even less information than before about what they have spent money on.

As part of the organisational strategy, AA International must be clear about the amount and type of funds that will be needed in the future. AAI UK has pursued the de-restriction course with such success that now 69% of all income is either country unrestricted (£15 million) or general fund (£10 million). 3 years ago it was just 26%.

With regard to general fund reporting, there is still a lack of clarity about what unrestricted money is spent on and therefore getting feedback can sometimes be difficult. There are significant problems in tracking general funds within AAI.

It is equally important to ensure good quality of information that supports the credibility and transparency of the organisation. Countries should take greater responsibility for ensuring the quality of their reports and follow the basic reporting guidelines.

F. COMMUNICATIONS

1. AFRICA REGION

There have been many positive achievements in communications in the Africa region, including :

- Positive Lives, an HIV photographic exhibition that toured Zimbabwe, Malawi, Tanzania, Kenya, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Ghana and South Africa, supported by workshops, school visits, cultural activities and extensive media debate around stigma, discrimination, gender and access to healthcare
- An increasing number of internal publications on our work, as thematic reports, research publications and newsletters
- Celebrity Trips to programmes in Mozambique, Uganda and Ghana, with extensive media coverage secured internationally
- EXPO 2002 – Exhibition of the works of NGOs in Ghana
- Launching of a joint Resource Centre for Development Advocacy (RECDA) in Ghana
- Mobilising people through the media and highlighting the case for responsible mining
- Media campaigns around different issues such as the exploitation of sugarcane farmers and access to affordable Anti-Retro Viral and generic drugs
- A documentary by Kenya, supporting grassroots action, won an award for best documentary in Africa during the Africa Cinema week in October 2003
- The launch of a Country Strategy Paper in Tanzania attracted much media coverage and general interest
- Campaigns in Uganda covered the plight of internally displaced people by war, and the education of the girl child.

Challenges to effective communications include a limited information technology infrastructure across most of the continent; limited investment in human resource capacity; inadequate sharing of information; limited networking amongst Africa country programmes; inadequate communication with the poor themselves.

2. AMERICAS REGION

Brasil, Guatemala and USA have engaged actively in communications work. Guatemala and Haiti are involved in some local communications work, and Haiti in particular when they experience emergencies like the recent floods. In Brasil, AAI highlighted issues of trade, GMO-Free foods and education. The USA increased media coverage of our work and AAI in general. In Guatemala promotional materials are produced in both English and Spanish and widely distributed, and created a significant resource base on the website and intranet.

Communication challenges included limited staff capacity and skills, campaigns not always being associated in the public eye with AAI, and limited technical support.

3. ASIA REGION

The development of an Asia Strategy for Websites has meant that countries with limited resources and skills have been able to launch their own website. In addition to the obvious promotion and engagement opportunities this brings to the organisation, it means that people now have a vehicle with which to write stories. The lesson learned is that it is better to go for a simple solution now than to wait for the “bells and whistles” version that might never see the light of day. Formulation of an Asian Communications Team is progressing well, and convening regional workshops to improve skills has paid off.

- In Afghanistan, an identity was established in 18 months from a zero base, with internet services provided and an internal communications system established.
- In Bangladesh, the 20th Anniversary provided a platform where diverse groups of people including donors, individual activists and grassroots participants could voice their opinions and concerns. This was extensively covered by the media (print and electronic) and laid the foundations for future relationships.

- In China, a country programme website has been established.
- In India, communities are engaged in documenting their own stories through participatory video and participatory theatre, and a photo bank has been created for use in media as well as within AAI
- In Pakistan, through an extensive media and communications campaign against sexual harassment in the workplace, we have been successful in mobilising trade unions, industry, civil society, government and private organisations on this sensitive issue.
- In Thailand, a website was launched in both English and Thai.
- In Vietnam, various target groups have been reached, from grassroots in communities to policy makers through media, publications, workshops, press conference, and public hearings.

Communication challenges included too much focus on the people we work with rather than the people we need support from; limited skill and sophistication to run successful campaigns; infrastructural and capacity problems, for example, Afghanistan; pressure from the regional office to implement their initiatives at the country level, while these initiatives were top down and not always in line with country objectives and plans; insufficient staff for the various Communications functions – development communications, internal communications, external communications, donor communications and media advocacy; changing the perception of ActionAid Pakistan from being just a donor organisation to an activist NGO; in some areas, discrediting of NGOs by the government; geographical constraints, such as limited communications with mountainous or rural areas.

4. EUROPE REGION

In Ireland, AAI has finally been accepted as a key player in international development, a process which took almost 20 years. In Italy, AAI's public profile was improved by the launch of AAI's work at the Italia-Africa events, sponsored by the mayor of Rome. An ActionAid website is generating over 2.5 million website hits per month (main actionaid.org site). The shift of our youth work to 'creative activism' engaged 10,000 young activists. AAI was a finalist in two media awards in 2002, winning an Amnesty Media Award in 2003. The "Chip Campaign" was imaginative, integrated and innovative. The 2003 World Trade Organisation ministerial meeting in Cancun saw AAI's best co-ordinated and most effective media-advocacy drive for an international meeting to date. 33,000 educational publications have been sold to schools, which raised £660,000.

Challenges included :

- very restricted resources dedicated to external communications
- a limited number of spokespeople able and available to promote AAI work
- getting recognition for the ActionAid brand while working in coalitions (which we have done for strategic reasons related to establishing our legitimacy)
- developing a structure for joint working by communications, policy and advocacy that will deliver integrated campaigns
- an inability to develop community activism, other than within the youth programme, and to convert the traditional ActionAid Week to an annual campaigning focus
- developing an effective structure for managing communications in a way that encourages external focus and relationship building, and which can work effectively in cross-cutting campaigning
- building the media team profile and reputation so it became a place that journalists would call, and the first place to call in relation to HIV. We now have some very good relationships with key journalists, but these should not be taken for granted.

Integration and Internal Communications

- need to better integrate our Policy/Advocacy work with our institutional communications. Campaigning is still new for us and research and analysis in our market is a priority.
- There is a lot of information from AA International. However, it does not always cover all needs we have and certain areas need improvement, for example the intranet
- Need for creation of a photo and video library accessible to all

- A more formalised international communications structure will encourage learning and internal communication
- From a fundraising perspective there has been little discussion about what might be useful to have in a shared repository either within the UK or within the AAI fundraising body as a whole.
- There needs to be much more sharing amongst fundraisers and communicators, it is mainly ad hoc at present.

G. FINANCE

1. Finance teams' roles and responsibilities

1.1. Guarding the agency's financial integrity

AAI operates with a high level of financial control, a major achievement in such a dispersed and varied organisation. Upward accountability is one aspect of financial integrity, and there is a well-established flow of financial information from Country Programmes to AAI to ensure a good overview of the organisation's financial position.

1.2. Supporting responsible local decision-making

Finance teams have a crucial role to play in supporting responsible local decision-making, and utilising available resources most effectively. Many of these initiatives are at the fore-front of development practice, and add real value to AAI work. However, some Country Programmes have not made as much progress, and this is determined by the level of engagement of the Country Director with financial issues and the level of engagement of the Head of Finance with development issues.

1.3. Supporting financial planning

On the income side, AAI finance staff play a central role in helping to forecast the mix of different kinds of revenue available, including unrestricted funding (flexible funds), National Funds, Development Area (DA) Funds and funds that are restricted for use on a single specific project (some official funding).

Increasing diversity in the type of funding sources is a major shift in the operating environment at the Country Programme and international levels and a major risk to AAI decentralisation, since new mechanisms for resource allocation may increase bureaucracy. Areas of resource allocation and cost analysis therefore require urgent attention

The issue of reserves is being examined, with substantial sums held at different levels, providing financial insulation from many risks, but large amounts of reserves are highly restricted in their use, in particular as a result of Child Sponsorship, so it is necessary to consider ways of decreasing these restrictions.

2. ActionAid International's way of working

2.1. Funding

The funds provided through Child Sponsorship have been a foundation stone of AAI, simplifying resource allocation decisions, and allowing for medium term commitments to communities and the flexibility to respond to their evolving priorities and avoid a bureaucratic approach. Increasing other sources of revenue over the last five years has supported initiatives which are not specific to one community.

2.2. Leadership

Many AAI staff are not tightly managed, and while they may be consulted, persuaded and requested to do things, are rarely told what to do. Internal decisions are political negotiations, through which individual staff choose whether or not to change what they do. AAI therefore relies on leaders both to stimulate processes of reflection and development among local communities and also to advise and guide staff, encouraging them to understand what AAI is trying to achieve and to use their own experience and common sense to achieve it.

The pivotal position in AAI current and future structure is the Country Director, and enlightened leadership in this position appears to be the single most important factor in creating the values-based organisations necessary for good development practice.

2.3. Issues for further consideration

Further decentralisation

In general, across the organisation a sustained effort is needed to resist the temptation to see AAI as a corporate whole and to support the decentralised way of working. Hierarchical structures remain in some Country Programmes, and it may be appropriate to look at other ways of supporting the people who are taking the initial decisions (in this case sub-national Regional Managers) so that the organisation can have confidence in them.

Fragile way of working

The decentralised way of working is fragile and subject to a number of pressures, including financial constraints. In relation to financial issues, it could be damaged by the loss of unrestricted funds at the local level or the introduction of more bureaucratic resource allocation processes.

Accountability of Country Directors

Country Directors have very significant autonomy within light line-management structure and can choose not to allow their peers or management team to hold them to account for all of their actions. They are in a powerful position, perhaps too powerful, and this is an issue for decentralisation at every level within the organisation. It may be appropriate to consider ways of strengthening downward accountability rather than hierarchical methods of clipping Country Directors' wings.

3. Country finance teams' roles and responsibilities

3.1. Achievements

Financial control

AAI has worked hard to prevent both the misuse of funds and corruption and has maintained a generally high level of financial control. The control environment is not perfect; weaknesses are noted such as late completion of bank reconciliations, late submission of reports for donors and incomplete fixed assets registers, and financial irregularities occur to a limited extent. AAI's control environment appears to be impressively robust.

Internal audit

AAI employs dedicated and professional internal audit staff at the international and national levels.

Upward financial accountability

Finance teams in Country Programmes put substantial effort into upward financial accountability, and have a clear understanding of the information they are expected to provide and the timetable they are expected to meet for reporting.

Country and regional level initiatives

There has been substantial innovation within finance teams at all levels, and examples of good practice at the country and regional level include:

A number of Country Programme finance teams have taken initiatives to provide capacity building support to partner organisations and to programme staff, including identification of any shortfalls and then providing training and on-going support.

Block budgeting

There are many references to the use of 'block budgeting' across the organisation, ranging from budgeting for horizontal working groups to DAs. This approach has a major empowering effect, supporting the decentralised way of working and rapid, local-level decision-making.

3.2. Issues for further consideration

Different levels of involvement by finance teams

Some Country Programme's finance teams are substantially more involved in programme work than others. Given that Finance has a crucial role to play in AAI work, and a moral and legal obligation to make the best use of every pound it has available, the continual involvement of finance staff would seem to be a prerequisite.

Different levels of resourcing of finance teams

There are significant disparities between Country Programmes in terms of how much is invested in the finance function. For instance, here are four specific data points as number of staff as a indicator:

Country Programme	Number of finance staff at end 2003	Expenditure 2002 (£m)
India	17	7.8
Uganda	17	3.7
Pakistan	2	1.5
Sierra Leone	11	1.4

The number of Country Programmes pursuing broadly similar programmatic goals provides a useful opportunity for benchmarking.

Financial accountability to communities

Finance teams could take on responsibility for ensuring financial accountability to communities within the ALPS structures. Challenges include enskilling finance staff to undertake new tasks; the extent to which AAI is prepared to become financially transparent; necessary sensitivity to working effectively with programme staff and with communities.

Management accounts

For the second year running, the Internal Audit Annual Report in 2003 noted that “a sizeable number of Country Programmes are still being managed without adequate management information”. This is a serious issue. This is a grave failing on the part of Country Programme Heads of Finance, and provides a powerful example of the limitations of centrally issued policies and the organisation’s reliance on personal understanding and motivation at the local level.

4. Resource allocation and three year planning

There has been impressive progress in a wide range of fundraising activities and AAI will have to work out new ways of deciding how best to use the resources available. AAI is not presently making such important resource allocation decisions as well as it could, with country-level work not being allocated funds, and reserves building up. Three year planning processes are not generating coherent three year plans, but are used to prepare careful one-year budgets with two years of rough projections added on afterwards.

Current methods of resource allocation decisions should be reviewed, as a wide range of different criteria are used at the DA, Country and International levels. While there is concern that international work has been insufficiently funded in AAI, such as Horizontal Working Groups (HWG) struggling to take shape and deliver, it is not always clear how issues are selected for macro-level policy and advocacy work and whether they are always in touch with the current situation and priorities of local communities.

5. Broadening Internal Audit’s role to include social audits

Rather than set up new mechanisms for verification of other criteria, it may be worth considering whether the existing mechanism could be broadened, but this would require a substantial change in the skills and experience of people working in and managing Internal Audit.

Internal Audit also often plays an important role in sharing good practice and helping staff strengthen their skills.

6. Quantifying partners’ financial management capacity

This will bring a number of benefits, including making partners’ financial management capacity concrete in the minds of managers and staff and providing a simple way of measuring progress, or lack thereof. Since AAI

relies on the financial management of its partners as a critical factor in its ability to work towards its mission, it would be good practice to measure and manage this factor actively and regularly.

7. International and regional finance teams' roles and responsibilities

It is useful to note that the international finance team does not manage Country Programme finance teams, but provides guidance and support. However, Country Programme Heads of Finance are managed by Country Directors, who in turn are managed by Regional Directors. There is thus no single organisation-wide finance function, but rather many separate finance functions.

7.1. Achievements

- Setting standards and objectives: AAI Financial Management Framework and Finance function strategy.
- Regular finance report and statutory accounts
- Supporting finance teams internationally
- Treasury Management

7.2. Issues for further consideration

While the Finance Strategic Plan contains a series of detailed objectives, not many have been implemented. Within the framework of decentralisation, there may not be incentives to do this at a local and regional level.

Leadership for the Heads of Finance

A key role of the international finance team is to provide leadership to the Heads of Finance, and informs many of their working methods.

AAI Financial Management Framework

There is scope to review and strengthen the AAI Financial Management Framework (AFMF), and it may be appropriate to do this with explicit reference to the relationships between the centre and Country Programmes and to how the AFMF is used in practice.

The statements of principles and standards appear to be inconsistent and incomplete.

Management information

It may well be more useful to examine the need for useful and quality information at a CP level. The internationalisation process will require an assessment of what financial information is really necessary.

8. Income

8.1. Variety of sources of income

The main source of AAI income continues to be regular committed giving from the UK, Italy, Spain and Greece. But over the last few years, AAI has diversified its sources of revenue and is now in a strong position for continued growth.

Income by Type, 2001 – 2003

<i>All figures in £m</i>	2001	2002	2003
Child sponsorship	39.3	30.1	32.7
Other regular giving	6.9	18.4	21.7
Official funding	10.0	13.0	16.0
Other	10.2	10.9	9.4
Total	66.4	72.4	79.8

The major risk associated with diversified funding is that it undermines AAI's way of working. It may be possible to influence some donors' policies, but it would probably be very difficult. All of the risks associated with different sources on income need to be recognised and managed.

9. Cost analysis: Why collect all this financial information?

At the local level, project staff use financial information to plan and monitor the implementation of specific projects and consider questions of cost-effectiveness and value-for-money. At the national level, some information is used to inform senior management decisions and other information is collected to meet the demands of Regional and International offices.

a) Statutory requirements

In the UK, AAI meets the requirements of the Statement of Recommended Practice published by the Charity Commission in its published accounts, making it easier to compare AAI accounts to other similar UK charities' accounts. Internationalisation has removed this requirement from AAI, as legal requirements in the Netherlands allow a great deal of flexibility in how accounts are presented. This provides an excellent opportunity for AAI to restructure its aggregated accounts.

b) Describing how AAI spends its funds

While it is interesting to see how different patterns of expenditure are played out across an organisation, there must be specific objectives for, and uses for information collected by AAI.

c) Comparing the efficiency of similar activities

AAI may be interested in comparing the efficiency of similar activities carried out in the same place at different times or in different places at the same time, and financial measures will do this only to a limited extent, since there are many variables within these indicators. Country Programmes tend to analyse their costs in the same way year after year, but this provides only simple historical comparisons rather than an absolute-based review of efficiency.

10. A note on cost-effectiveness

Impact is notoriously hard to measure for NGOs, in particular in relation to key rights-based outcomes such as empowerment, and can certainly not be quantified in any way that allows comparison between projects, even for the range of service delivery work that AAI carries out. Furthermore, cost is not necessarily the most important factor in relation to inputs, since quality of staff contribution may be much more important. NGOs must aim for "effectiveness", defining that concept in a way that reflects their core aims and objectives.

11. Statutory cost classification

Combining the natural cost classification and the statutory cost classification would be a useful way of simplifying the returns sent from Country Programmes to the centre. Even after internationalisation is complete, AAI UK will be required to prepare annual accounts in line with the SORP. AAI UK could almost certainly justify accounting for all of its transfers to other AAI organisations as 'project costs'. And this would effectively remove the current statutory constraint to cost classification. However, the International Directors currently use the statutory cost classification as a rough measure of efficiency, and it may be an opportune time to use the process of internationalisation to review what financial information should be used to describe AAI work.

12. A note on internationalisation

Internationalisation reinforces the basic analysis set out above and will lead to more decentralisation and less direct control by AAI, over time leading to a shift in the balance of power: This creates real challenges for AAI in putting the concept into practice, and also brings risks, including, including diverting senior management time at the County Programme level to new local governance issues and creating new demands for new types of accountability.

Membership of AAI International may act as a benchmark for NGOs that could be extended beyond AAI, that would demonstrate a commitment to Fighting Poverty Together.

13. Overall Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Practical steps to help staff understand the key conceptual issues which define what the organisation is trying to achieve could include.

Recommendation 2: Develop simple communications messages to help staff keep the key organisational principle of decentralisation in mind, for example, ‘putting the grassroots first’ or ‘decentralisation is the way to Fight Poverty Together’.

Recommendation 3: Inspire Country Directors and Heads of Finance to provide leadership for their teams which encourages finance staff to be actively involved in programme work.

Recommendation 4: Conduct more research on the services that finance staff provide to national teams and the numbers of finance staff employed in different Country Programmes, since this could inform country level managers about the level of resourcing that is appropriate to provide different types of support by the finance team to programmes.

Recommendation 5: Make finance staff responsible for financial accountability to local communities. This could have wide-ranging impact across Country Programmes’ work and it may be conceptually simple enough to do within the model of devolved leadership.

Recommendation 6: Encourage all Heads of Finance to recognise and meet their responsibility to provide useful management accounts to senior management teams every month.

Recommendation 7: Finance staff should consider how they can help staff and managers to make resource allocation decisions. This may include further research into current practice and developing practical tools and methods.

Recommendation 8: The International Finance Team should encourage Heads of Finance to provide leadership to finance staff that will motivate them to live out AAI values in all their work and to support the decentralised way of working.

Recommendation 9: Develop simple, accessible ways of communicating key standards, principles and structures in order to increase staff understanding of them and encourage increasing adherence to them.

Recommendation 10: AAI finance staff should consider how they can contribute to recognising and managing the risks associated with different sources of funding.

Recommendation 11: Consider including a proportion of staff costs and central office overheads in Development Area level accounts of project costs; include this in any public statement of project costs. This could be based on monthly assumptions about the amount of time that staff spend working on different projects or a detailed approach based on timesheets.

Recommendation 12: Consider what financial information at national and international levels actively supports what AAI wants to achieve and how it is organised to achieve it. Allocation on a geographical basis remains important and may still be the most simple available compromise for describing AAI work in financial terms. It is relevant for a great deal of rights-based work, as people are often organised (and oppressed) on geographical terms. Rather than look at different categories of expenditure analysis, it may be useful to explore looking at process indicators which provide some level of reassurance about the quality of development work carried out with funds.

H. ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

1. Global branding of FPT - alliance opportunities and risks of RBA

AAI has branded its own strategy for fighting poverty as "FPT" but the "Together" seems to exclude alliance building with those other global players who have preceded it in rights-based advocacy work. The strategic positioning of AAI in the poverty sector is neither one of leader nor follower or collaborator at a global level, and this limits the contribution that AAI can make, and results in missed opportunities.

2. A large International NGO working with poor communities and staffed by nationals

While AAI can be seen as a local player, with local staff, it is still perceived to be a foreign NGO and northern donor agency working in partnership with local NGOs, government and other Northern NGOs doing service delivery work directly to communities.

3. A donor agency working with local partners

Where AAI works with or through established NGOs as partner organisations, there is a more visible attempt at "partnership". AAI is still often seen as a donor and the challenge is to articulate motivations and methods of engagement. While use of AAI resources plays a role in partnerships, there are examples of non-funding based partnerships that can be used to strengthen AAI identity as a partner around specific rights issues and processes.

4. What Internationalisation is generally understood to mean

- Internationalisation is often mistaken for the application of a Rights Based Approach, and it is important to clarify the differences.
- The emergence of the Governance Unit may be the most reliable measure to ensure that the evolution of the governance board is monitored and timely interventions are made when required. The exclusion of the HR/OD Director (and by extension the HR/OD structure) from the Governance Unit may be a missed opportunity to tap into available capacity to address the HR dimension of building up the governance boards.
- Relocation of the International Secretariat to Johannesburg, South Africa is perhaps one of the most visible signs of the implementation of internationalisation, and is seen as a significant move to show that Africa is at the centre of the fight against poverty
- More decision-making at CP and DA/DI level has been mistakenly perceived as part of the internationalisation process, but in fact has been ongoing, starting with decentralisation from AAI in UK to the regions in Asia and in Africa. Internationalisation is a different process which implies a fundamental change in the governance of the organisation - the political ownership, control and direction (power relations and strategic direction) of AAI.
- The Internationalisation process is clearly driven from above, and not updated to other staff in the CPs below senior management level. This is because the process is still evolving and with the relocation of the International secretariat, there has been insufficient time for the International Secretariat to mount a sustained road show to sensitise all CPs on internationalisation.

5. What is not yet understood in internationalisation

- How the reporting lines/hierarchy as it currently exists will be shortened through internationalisation?
- Relationships with other CPs especially those that raise funds such as AAI UK and Greece, and whether there will be direct or indirect funding. The intention is that all fundraising will be directed at a common fund to be distributed among the CPs based on need and availability, but this new allocation process is not clear to the CPs.
- Available documentation on internationalisation does not elaborate on sub-regionalisation, such as whether or not and how it will accommodate sub-regional initiatives.

6. Perceived risks of Internationalisation

- Failure to accommodate sub-regional initiatives.
- Localisation leading to loss of international identity which had distinct advantages in addressing politically sensitive rights issues at national level, or a loss of political insulation.
- The challenge to raise own funds has accelerated the pace to diversify the funding bases of the CPs, and this could lead to efforts being diverted from the core to fundraising.

7. The People Factor in AAI

7.1. Integration of organisational changes in existing policies and procedures:

- inclusion of changes to reflect the shift to non-hierarchical, self-managing approaches and collective and collaborative working styles is still pending;
- the HR function is still based on the traditional concepts and practices that are rooted in hierarchy such as job
- job grades exist in a hierarchical format;
- performance management is somewhat changing as it reflects the effort in breaking the hierarchy
- there is as yet no system for measuring collective performance and therefore holding the collective accountable for the performance of the CP rather than individuals
- the performance review system does not cater for collective performance review, and does not count in the performance review process

7.3 Re-skilling/HRD in AAI:

- absence of an HRD strategy for reskilling staff and management at CP level to cope with the organisational changes taking place at all levels;
- the shift to RBA, internationalisation, partnership development and gender mainstreaming require significant reskilling among even the senior staff of AAI.

7.4. Staffing

The staff number has been reduced in line with the shift from service delivery to the rights based approach, with working indirectly through partners necessitating reduced staff requirements in most CPs.

Gender mix of staffing is improving but is still far off from achieving the desired 50/50 or close to 50/50 balance especially at senior level. What would be a worrisome gap is the extent of differentiation where some CPs might actually be not doing anything to close this gender imbalance yet it exists.

Working with and through partners and consequent reduction of staff has resulted in work overload for staff across the CPs. A 24/7 approach is being applied with potentially disastrous impact on staff work and life balance, and there was no evidence of mechanisms to manage stress in the HR/OD functions of the CPs visited.

7.5. Key Competencies required to drive RBA

AAI requires certain key competencies as reflected in its structures and staffing to drive the RBA agenda at the programming and the OD frontiers, but these are often not present, and some such competencies in which programme staff are found to be low in skill or lacking are: Gender competence, project development and management competence, partnership development competence and rights based advocacy competence.

7.6 Organisational learning and competence building to drive RBA

The key competencies required by AAI can be available in staff as they are recruited or they can be developed on the job. A mix of various approaches to competence building is usually desirable and is a key HR/OD function.

7.7. The challenges facing organisational learning and competence building

- Identification of key competence areas where HRD should take place appears to lag behind other organisational changes and there has been no comprehensive assessment of the competence base of the CPs.
- Opportunities for learning are lost due to limited time to organise learning experiences by staff and CPs. There is limited analysis of issues beyond reporting, planning sessions and retreats
- Opportunities for regional learning are not taken up as programming and staffing issues are not regionalised except for Africa Regional Office.
- Hands-on learning opportunities are limited due to lack of professional/technical leadership capacity and time to mentor young talent
- While innovations are shared vertically they are not shared horizontally among CPs.

7.8. AAI Organisation Structures & Systems

Devolution has taken place and there is a sense of responsibility among the various Country Directors and the DA level managers; the hierarchy has been shortened between the decision-making level and the frontier for fighting poverty at CP level. However, the shortening of hierarchy does not necessarily mean a de-concentration of power or a sharing of power. There is little evidence that this has been one of the consequences of the structural shift.

Horizontal working groups on thematic issues provide flexibility by involving people across the organization and pooling expertise.

7.9. Challenges apparent in the organisation structure

Resource allocation responsibility is felt to be based at AAI International Headquarters and not devolved to CPs.

Horizontal working groups are weak as staff prioritise their own line functions before finding time for the horizontal functions, and conditions necessary for effective working groups are not fulfilled. Hierarchy and male domination are evident and this limits the contributions of the marginalised segments of affected communities.

The process of regionalisation has not recognised that the Africa RO has the widest span of control and reporting than any other in the organisation, the greatest distances to be covered, and a generally under-developed infrastructure; emerging sub-regional structures have not been anticipated and not catered for in the organisation design.

Power and/or leadership responsibility centered in the CD and not always collaborative and nurturing to the rest of the team limits succession planning especially where membership of the senior management team is ordinarily expected to provide the pool for the next generation of CP leadership.

7.10. Systems

Systems have largely been developed for the mobilisation of resources and accountability to stakeholders. Though functional, some systems in particular the HR, M & E and learning systems may need some adjustments to be consistent with changes brought about by RBA and internationalisation. Internal reporting is hierarchical and does not encourage analysis of issues but emphasises reporting of activities and outputs.

7.11. AAI Partnerships as a Strategy for Implementing RBA

Partnership is already a mindset of all staff in some of the CPs and there is recognition of the need to work with partners. Some key observations in relation to partnership development are outlined below:

- The donor mode is apparent in relationships with communities and project groups.
- Selection process is variable and no organisation-wide approach to partnership has been developed.

8. Overall Recommendations

The following are the recommendations on the way forward in addressing some of the key Organisation Development issues emerging from this review:

8.1. RBA, Gender and AAI Identity

- AAI retains its global programme brand of FPT.
- Power, gender and patriarchy are at the core of the analysis and development of programme strategies to fight the causes of poverty at all levels.
- The identity of AAI should be managed carefully to reflect the new direction in which it is moving.

8.2. AAI Strategic Frameworks - Planning and Review

- Given that the rights agenda exists at three levels, community/national, sub-regional and global, and that rights issues are transnational/cross-border, planning frameworks be distinguished at these three levels.

8.3. Internationalisation

- The office of the AAI CEO, assisted by the newly-formed Governance Unit, should use a road show to discuss the concept and process of implementing Internationalisation as well as explain the programming and organisational implications it has on the CPs. CDs should continue the dialogue at national level and promote the use of the intranet as an additional source of information.
- Following this road show, it will be appropriate to then deploy the governance unit to facilitate the formation of national governance structures.

8.4. Knowledge management and learning

- AAI must acknowledge that it is essentially not yet working at the frontier of development practice. It is recommended that AAI acquires the knowledge that is available on these issues globally and reflects on how it wishes to break new ground or to make its distinctive contribution in fighting poverty.
- AAI should consider the integration of more analysis in its reporting formats, including of results achieved, lessons learnt on FPT, partnerships, gender and sustainability which should be captured continuously and shared among CPs, and may include some form of recognition for innovation and outstanding performance in fighting poverty.

8.5. Partnership development

- AAI is advised to harmonise its approach to partnerships across all CPs.
- As partnerships become an important component of AAI programming and OD, it is necessary to define key performance/result areas in relation to partnership development as well as indicators by which to assess CP performance.
- Risk assessment, arbitration and damage control mechanisms are needed in order to avoid destroying the image of other CPs and/or the AAI image through having one bad experience at CP or global level.

8.6. HR / People Factor Issues (PFI)

- Given the wide-ranging and fundamental changes in programming focus and approach, there is need to re-align the skills base of the organisation to meet these new demands, and an HR stock-taking is recommended.
- Substantial investment is required in developing young talent across the organisation, and also in the core competencies required in the short term to achieve a successful shift to RBA, partnerships and effectively fight poverty.

- HR policy frameworks must be harmonised across CPs and to integrate changes necessary as a result of internationalisation and devolvement, including new job descriptions, job titling to reflect flatter hierarchies and new functions.
- AAI is urged to revisit all HWGs and remodel them in a way that ensures they meet the conditions for effectiveness.
- Competence building at partnership level is better contracted out to third parties in order to manage the risk of AAI being unable to assess its own effectiveness and blaming the partners should it not have delivered or been ineffective.
- CDs and other Senior management team members must develop junior staff and should be assessed on the extent to which they have developed their CP Team's capacity.

8.7. AAI Organisation structure and devolvement

- Internationalisation and decentralisation have become part of the same process of devolving more authority and governance throughout the organisation. The process of devolvement should be clarified so that power does not become re-concentrated at lower levels such as at CD level. Giving up power should become a conscious process.
- Strengthen the in-built management succession plan at CP level to reduce perceptions about CP power structures, and build management capacity.
- The extent to which the CP structures and programmes are gendered should be a key performance indicator in the evaluation of a CD's performance. The International Gender Co-ordinator should be a full member of the International Directors forum.
- Proposed organisation design for an Internationalised AAI include :
 - Further develop the sub-regionalisation model started with the Africa and Asia regions to cater for the emerging cross border/geopolitical nature of an RBA programme.
 - Sub-regions to be set up incrementally, and may be established first around issues rather than regions;
 - Each sub-region co-ordinated by a designated Sub-regional Hub or Co-ordinator, not necessarily a full-time post at first.
 - Pilot the model for 1-2 years in Africa and then replicate if feasible in Asia and Latin America.
 - To address the operational challenges faced by a single Africa Regional Office, include Operations Support Director (OSD) to manage services to the CPs and the Sub-regional hubs, together with Professional Assistants (not Secretary or PA) to each Sub-Regional Co-ordinator.
 - Reduce bureaucracy and interact effectively with the CPs via the Professional Assistants appointed to provide support to the Sub-Regional Coordinates as they will do both programming and operational tasks (Senior Programme Assistant).
 - To ensure co-ordination between the sub-regional hubs and the ARO and the rest of the AAI, Sub-Regional Co-ordinators should be full members of the International Directors Forum, rather than only the Africa Region Director.

I. ACCOUNTABILITY, LEARNING AND PLANNING SYSTEM

1. Observations

1.1. General

ALPS was introduced, in parts, mainly in 2000 and 2001 in almost all AA countries. *ALPS represents an organisational paradigm shift that should be nurtured. The shift to ALPS and the adoption of FTP have been mutually reinforcing.*

Ways of dealing with ‘balanced multiple accountabilities’ have received particular attention.

More generally, the need for planning with the people who are to live with the changes is generally well understood and community-level plans are created with considerable investment being made by AAI to ensure a diversity of people and inclusive methodologies.

However, ALPS is not yet being applied systemically or systematically within each country or across the countries, themes and functions and there are some critical gaps in ALPS logic and application.

1.2. Source of good practice and understanding

There is great variation in the understanding of what ALPS is and is not. For some, it is PRRP, for others it is about being financially accountable to communities, for others it is about generally increased consultation and being open, for some it is all this and more.

1.3. Innovation

There is considerable innovation with ALPS-related processes and systems that represent RBA values, including financial accountability, social audits, 360 degree appraisals, partner reviews, peer reviews, micro-level planning, citizens’ juries, but it is sporadic rather than systemic and there is no systematic implementation of each of these as yet. It appears that these innovations are not being widely shared within the AAI system, or even within the countries.

1.4. Partners and ALPS

The implementation of ALPS via the partners is considerably more varied. In some countries (sub-national regions), it is part and parcel of the organisational strengthening work that AAI undertakes with its partners such as Brazil and India. For some, ALPS was supposed to be for AAI, and if it rubbed off then that was fine but not necessary. Others give partners copies of the ALPS Notes and expect the essence to shape the quality of the work. For a third group, it appears that ALPS has become more of a way of working and in their organisational strengthening work, it is incorporated without it being seen as a separate requirement, but simply part of ‘good development practice’.

1.5. Capacity-building on ALPS

In most but not all countries, ALPS-specific workshops were held at the onset and staff (and some partners) received copies of ALPS documents. However, after this first organisation-wide introduction of ALPS, it does not seem to be pursued as a continual skill-building process or as standard part of new staff induction. Induction processes on ALPS are not systematically available and their quality varies.

2. Gaps

The form and focus of ALPS – as described in the Guidelines – appears to be largely based on the perception of AAI as an implementing country programme and of the DA/DI level specifically, and assuming that child sponsorship is the sole source of funding. AAI today is a far more complex kaleidoscope of realities. What does ALPS mean for each of these issues, mechanisms, structures? The following key aspects do not have a place in the current conceptualisation of ALPS and represent critical areas for future improvements in light of the growing complexities of the organisation.

2.1. Issues and Aspects: Policy, advocacy and rights work; conflict and emergency situations, absence of MIS, multiple donor accountability, partner CBOs or NGOS, internationalisation.

2.2. Levels and Functions: Fundraising and child sponsorship, human resources development, information and communications.

2.3. Quality: The quality of accountability, learning and planning are not defined or tracked.

2.4. Accountability: Accountability is mainly interpreted as a financial requirement, but is less clearly understood and implemented as parts of RBA and the gender equity priority. Not all aspects or levels of the work appear to have clear objectives, which makes this level of accountability difficult to achieve.

2.5. Learning: There appears to be less understanding or discussion about the quality of learning. There appears to be little consolidation of learning. There appears to be a lack mechanism to identify shared learning needs. Learning fed by information from an MIS is not happening.

2.6. Planning: The planning process for themes and functions at any level is far less clear. However, as planning moves up the system, it appears to become an increasingly empty financial exercise, with little strategic effort or debate beyond the regional level, particularly in larger countries.

3. Threats

The current advances in exciting practice appear subject to several threats: diversity of funding and associated donor accountability; absence of centralised (coherent and interantionalised?) M&E and accountability following full internationalisation; unclarity about how partnership mechanisms.

4. Other key challenges

- The time-consuming nature of ALPS means that shortcuts are made in applying principles.
- Slow lead time for ALPS-related changes to become visible.
- The lack of staff capacity is stifling the further uptake of ALPS.
- Learning with respect to the global goals and objectives.
- Lack of clarity between ALPS and M & E.

5. Key Recommendations

Clarifying ALPS in AAI

- *Promote ALPS as a stool with three legs:* ‘core requirements’ as the minimum procedures, ‘principles’ as minimum quality standards, and ‘attitudes and behaviours’ as core success factors.
- *Identify and clarify recurring contradictions and ambiguities:* Notable among these is resolving the tensions between the CP and global level about whether or not Annual Reports are needed for the Global level and whether or not some core information will be collected by all CPs to help assess progress against global goals and objectives. Another ambiguity is how CSPs and 3-year rolling plans relate to each other. Finally, it requires some terminology clarification, notably how M & E relates to ALPS.
- *Critically assess the core requirements.* Given that the core requirements were largely based on a CP and DA/DI logic of ActionAid and that internationalisation will herald more rather than less diversity, the non-negotiable core requirements require scrutiny.
- *The original set of principles requires some reassessing.* It is not clear what the ‘true’ set of principles is.
- *Clarify the location of ALPS in the management structure* to help embed it as a cross-cutting responsibility.

Supporting the Ongoing Uptake of ALPS

- Current levels of support for ALPS are largely inadequate.
- *Fill the gaps!* Do not only fill the gaps related to core requirements but also for the principles and attitudes and behaviours.
- *Identify the most appropriate types of support for ongoing implementation.* Opportunities are needed for staff to reflect on implications, dilemmas and concerns they might have. What are the priorities for support per region, per function (national and international), and per country that can allow ALPS to thrive?
- *Invest where your priorities lie.* Appropriate levels of investment commensurate with the equal importance of all principles are critical to strengthen the current weak areas of RBA, gender equity, facilitation skills, experiential learning and participatory M & E.
- *Align the content and quality of capacity-building events with ALPS.* If training events are considered an important means then the content and quality of training events on related skills such as RBA, facilitation skills, MIS, etc, should align with ALPS.

Improving the Quality of ALPS

Currently the core requirements do not include explicit quality criteria for accountability or learning, and describe desired content of planning processes but do not detail the quality of the processes themselves.

- *Explore the potential of ALPS health checks and identify mechanisms for undertaking these quality audits.* Responsibility for this function should be clearly allocated, as is that of financial accountability.
- *Launch focused learning efforts to address existing ALPS dilemmas.* Many AAI staff struggle with ALPS in practice and establishing an active learning group across the CPs that identifies critical gaps in understanding, and then collects and shares ‘good practices’ should not be difficult.
- *Streamline focused reports.* Core reports vary enormously in quality and quantity. Much clarity would be gained, thus enhancing the likelihood of quality uptake of ALPS, by providing clearer guidance on simple reporting options.
- *Seek innovations and share them continually.* Continued conscious efforts are needed to identify gaps at all levels of the AAI system, pursue innovations, document and share the findings. Do not seek ‘best practices’ – good ones will do as well.
- *Validate and invest in all principles as equally important.* It appears that in ALPS, the principles are not all equally weighted. Much more energy has been invested in the accountability and transparency principles than in power/gender analysis and devolved decision-making.

Setting Clear ALPS Agendas

- *Set A, L, and P goals.* CPs, functions and themes can review the quality of their ALPS work and, where quality is lagging, set themselves annual or biannual learning, accountability and/or planning goals.
- *Improve tracking of ALPS implementation and innovations.* At the moment, it is not possible to know who has complied with which part of their core requirements and with which quality.
- *Provide open access to strategies and reviews.* With little effort, core documents can be posted to the web, which would be in line with AA’s ‘Right to Information’ Policy and could be helped to track the implementation of recommendations.

Specific A, L, and P Recommendations

- *Clarify what the ‘A’ of accountability stands for* with regard to Northern CPs, international functions, national and international policy work, and the regional level, given that accountability to marginalised citizens is a critical feature of ALPS yet hard to envisage implementing beyond the DA/DI level.
- *Clarify what learning means in AA.* Currently, it is used to cover any kind of reflection and change. More conscious efforts are needed to look critically at the idea of ‘lessons’ and how these help shape strategic rethinking.
- *Consider the question ‘who is doing the learning’* and assess whether reflective processes include those

who could benefit most from learning.

- *Invest in strategic planning.* Planning abounds in AA but not all of it is strategic. What (non-negotiable) quality criteria can be used to structure planning that ensures it is strategic?

ANNEX 1

Stakeholder Survey 2004 – A Summary

By Renee Kantelberg, Impact Assessment Unit, August 2004

ActionAid International (AAI) conducted both an online survey and a paper survey in June 2004 as part of the Taking Stock II initiative, asking for our views on the main causes of poverty, AAI future work and on AAI's performance in achieving its goals. There were 617 AAI staff (152 European staff + 465 international staff) respondents, 218 international partner respondents and 124 AAI stakeholder respondents.

The feedback has produced very valuable and insightful ideas and suggestions. It must be said a large number of comments were made by respondents in reply to open questions in the survey and a selection of these are in this summary. Many comments were directly supportive and appreciative of AAI's work. This is a brief summary that gives a general overview of the main themes and views expressed by the respondents.

The summary is divided into four sections as in the survey.

- Highlights – main points made by respondents
- Section A - How well is AAI achieving its goals?
- Section B - AAI work in your country
- Section C - Partners and Stakeholders: AAI's work with you
- Section D - AAI future work on main causes of poverty and injustice

Highlights - 'Big picture' main points made by respondents

AA International's Performance and impact

- AAI's rights based approach, focusing on root causes rather than merely symptoms
- Empowerment of locals and grassroots collaboration
- Policy influencing in the south
- REFLECT, working on HIV/AIDS, education, agriculture and gender

AA International's strengths and challenges

- Openness & transparency
- Diversity & flexibility
- Collaboration, dedication & determination

But

- Is AAI spreading itself too thinly – does AAI lack focus?

Main Drivers of Poverty

- Imbalances of power – North/South– unfair international trade rules, globalisation, privatisation etc
- Lack of political will & accountability
- Gender inequality
- Poor governance
- Lack of access to natural resources, knowledge,
- War, conflict
- HIV/AIDS – health issues
- Lack of education

ActionAid International's future work

- Justice, rights & empowerment at local level
- Alliance building
- Advocacy & campaigning
- HIV/AIDS
- Conflict
- Gender
- Education
- International Trade
- Agriculture
- Governance

“Its move towards advocacy is welcome and necessary but the intellectual and moral credibility to argue the alternative vision always remains dependent on delivering a body of innovative, effective development work at the grassroots. Don't get too trendy and detached from small scale development”
Quote from International Stakeholder – Stakeholder survey

Section A – How well is AAI achieving its goals

- **Overall positive views:** The feedback of the survey is positive and AAI is doing “Quite well” at achieving its goals in “supporting poor people to organise, prioritise and express their needs...” All groups gave solid feedback in favour of AAI's ability to work with the poor and its local partners in achieving its objectives and influencing policies and practices of international institutions.
- **AAI performance is making a difference:** The responses and views remain optimistic and positive in regard to AAI's work being accountable, cost effective, innovative and collaborative. 83% of respondents in Europe and internationally viewed AAI's performance as “Very well” in being *accountable*. Cost effectiveness was the lowest scoring category but was still considered by most as doing “Quite well” - 73% of respondents.
- **Fulfilling its mission better:** Views on how well AAI is doing in fulfilling its mission over the last five years were generally positive. “Better” received the majority of responses (57% - Partners, 46% - Stakeholders, 62% - International responses, 50% - Europe respondents) with a smaller percentage responding “Significantly better” (25% - Partners, 16% - Stakeholders, 18% - International responses, 30% - Europe respondents). “No change” to “Worse” averaged 6% of respondents.

“AA has significantly increased the knowledge of target groups towards self actualisation. It is like helping the poor and the marginalised persons to help themselves”. Quote from Partner organisation - Partner stakeholder survey

Section B – AAI work in your country

- **Divide in the difference AAI's involvement is making:** This part of the survey reveals the strongest divide between respondents. International staff, partners and stakeholders are more optimistic. 70% of international respondents felt that “some changes have taken place. Results are evident” and 10% felt an “exceptional difference” was taking place. While 36% of respondents in Europe viewed “some changes have taken place. Results are evident” and 58% felt AAI was “still grappling with issues. Foundations are not in place”. Only 3% of European respondents felt an “exceptional difference” was taking place.
- **Main points of AAI's most significant response to poverty:** The responses to this part of the survey were varied and thoughtfully written by many. Some common ‘bigger picture’ issues stand out amongst them.

“...it would be better if AA keeps an eye on small issues where the un-served and under-served people will benefit from their program and they will be able to contribute in the socio economic development” Quote from Partner organisation - Partner stakeholder survey

- Rights – based approaches & advocacy
- Power imbalances
- Empowerment campaigning rather than just service delivery praised and encouraged
- Collaboration – grassroots level, strengthening of communities and of collaborative structures, mobilization, networking partners, stakeholders and building relationships
- Gender
- Education
- HIV/AIDS
- Trade/Agriculture
- Emergency response work
- Long term focus

“... the building of relationships with partners, stakeholders and staff in order to help people understand that it is essential we work together in order to tackle the causes of poverty to make a difference in the long term.”
Quote from International Staff – International Staff survey.

- **Positive skills and expertise in quality of relationships:** In addressing issues of poverty, respondents viewed AAI as skilled and qualified. There was not much variance between groups. Stakeholders felt that AAI had strong expertise and skills in political will, staff capacity, research capacity and quality of relationships. AAI staff gave a more positive rating to skills in financial resources, quality of relationships and time dedicated to task. Partners were relatively equal in all categories with quality of relationships being the strongest skill.

“Perseverance, leadership and commitment to causes and needs of poor and marginalised people is valued most in AA work in general” Quote from International Partner - Partner Survey

- **Community Development as main programme strength:** Most respondents shared the common view that AAI’s main programme strength is community development (Partners 85%, Stakeholders – 76%, all AAI staff – 84%). Empowering women and primary school education were the next strongly viewed programme strengths. Secondary education was viewed as the weakest programme strength.
- **AAI is an advocacy organisation that relates to the issues of poverty:** Overall responses consider AAI as an advocacy organisation that understands and relates to the issues of poverty. Capacity builder of local NGOs, supporter of local movements, and sharing of research/information were also key impressions of AAI from respondents. AAI as a relief organisation was the least held view.

Section C – Partner and Stakeholders: AAI’s work with you

- **AAI supports and understands our organisational objectives:** The responses from stakeholders and partners both within Europe and outside positively viewed AAI as an organisation that understands and builds the capacity of partner organisations so it can carry out work more effectively. However, partners expressed there is still a need for AAI to listen and learn from partner relationships while informing partners of AAI’s own objectives.

“The work of AA is evidently positive especially in influencing policy change towards benefiting the poor and marginalised. Although there may be gaps and weaknesses in the organisation, this should not pull AA back but they should look into aspects of working and improving in them and maintaining the strengths and positive influences of the organisation” Quote from Partner International organisation- Partner Stakeholder survey

- **Capacities building, trust and sharing of information:** A strong majority of stakeholder and partners felt that capacity building was the key feature that works well in their partnership. Supporting, training, sharing information and building trust within partnerships and communities were also viewed as main features that positively stand out in their work with AAI. And that there was a harmony in missions to

improve and strengthen poor communities and their project aims. Some areas for improvement were reflected in strengthening capacity building in conflict resolution and that the monitoring and evaluation follow-up system could be improved so that we can share lessoned learned.

- **Solidarity with the poor, transparency and dedication to their mission are valued while flexibility is a concern:** Partners and stakeholders expressed that AAI is very transparent and open in their willingness to share information and give free hand to the capable partners in decision-making. There is a solid respect from respondents on the dedication and commitment AAI exemplifies in their relationships, values and desire to reflect on their work. One common concern that was raised amongst respondents was AAI’s holistic and flexible approach is spreading itself thin and creating less tangible results.

“We value most AA’s commitment in working with rural resource poor households. What concerns us is a shift in supporting service delivery programs in advocacy only” Quote from International Partner organisation – Partner Survey

Section D - AAI’s future work and main causes of poverty

- **Corruption, inequality and conflict:** These were the main points that the survey reflected as the key drivers of poverty. Corruption and corrupt governments with lack of political will and accountability. Staff and stakeholder reflections spoke about government attitudes and the politics of poverty remaining unchanged making it hard for any significant transformation to happen. Inequalities both culturally and economically -including educational, gender, resource use, trade, and opportunity to make choices - were also expressed strongly as key contributors to poverty. Finally, conflict stood out as a main contributor to poverty and injustice now and in the future as rights are denied and power relations are challenged.
- **Building relationships, empowerment and sustainability:** A large majority of respondents felt that alliance building, communication with stakeholders, partners and other ‘Actionaiders’ is an area that AAI should continue to improve in order to build networks, foster good practice with local communities and understand the challenges that poor people are faced with daily. Rights and empowerment were viewed as another area that AAI must become even more involved in for supporting community initiatives and advocacy campaigns on behalf of the poor and marginalised. Finally, sustainability in regards to the environment, financial resources and ‘investing in people’ were positively stated as areas that AAI should continue to do work in.

“Equity focused development should be the priority of the government. International NGOs should support this aspect and help the civil society to put this strongly and effectively into place”. Quote from International staff – International Staff survey

“Sometimes AAI is good at cultivating and forming relationships/partnerships but does not continue to nurture them to sustain them” Quote from International Stakeholder – Stakeholder survey