

## **ActionAid International Emergency Strategy 2003-2006**

### **Introduction**

When the essentials of a dignified life- water, shelter, food, security, health and livelihoods- are in immediate crisis, and people do not have the capacity available to cope, we use the term emergency.

People experience more suffering in a short time during emergencies than at other times. This intensity of suffering causes trauma that continues to affect people long after the events are over. Different groups of people are affected differently and have different recovery patterns, and among these groups the poorest and most marginalized have the least capacity to cope with the problems they face. This strategy describes how ActionAid International will work to mitigate the causes and effects of emergencies, and to find opportunities in these extraordinary times to fight the long term aspects of poverty.

### **Our Approach**

ActionAid International acknowledges the need to match our work with the reality of emergencies as experienced by poor people. So we adopt a long-term perspective in our analysis and practice. Our approach covers preparedness, response and recovery. We promote the active agency of people affected by emergencies. Through our work we address people's concerns for their immediate needs, but also the maintenance of their livelihood in the long term.

ActionAid International believes that emergencies are not one off events but that they are the result of a context of vulnerability, an outcome of certain models of development.

ActionAid International adopts an approach that links emergencies and the processes of development and shares the aims of humanitarian aid and development from a long-term perspective. In practice, this implies the combination and linking of these interventions in order to reduce vulnerability and to reinforce the capacities of individuals, groups and institutions with whom we work, as a basis for their empowerment.

From this approach, the ActionAid International seeks to ensure humanitarian aid not only gives relief, but also satisfies the immediate needs of those affected by an emergency, and promotes structural changes in the long term that protect the right to live with dignity.

#### **A long-term perspective**

ActionAid International's approach does not necessarily imply our long-term presence, or even a long-term intervention. However, for us it is important to achieve a thorough strategy that helps us to understand:

- the causes and patterns of vulnerability;
- the close relationship between poverty, vulnerability and the denial of rights; and
- those factors which undermine people's capacity to cope.

This approach promotes long term and sustainable solutions through the integration of humanitarian work and on-going development work. The development interventions must be orientated to the reduction of vulnerability, incorporating actions of prevention, mitigation

and preparation for emergencies, so that communities are more prepared to respond with efficiency, that they are more resilient and they have more capacity to recover from these crises. Emergency responses will use the opportunities available to contribute to the long-term goals of poverty eradication.

### **Addressing the causes**

ActionAid International's approach seeks to tackle the causes of emergencies, the underlying problems associated with how institutions run – particularly in terms of their behaviour, policy and practices. We seek to address these issues by enhancing understanding and mobilising people to raise their voices. We work with civil society to promote positive action at local, national and international levels.

### **Participation and Empowerment**

A key component of ActionAid International's approach is the participation of people affected by emergencies, particularly the most vulnerable groups with whom we always seek to work. We promote their right to participate in and to influence the decisions that affect them in the planning as well as the implementation. We support the processes of empowerment of the individuals and vulnerable groups with whom we work such as women; thus increasing their power of negotiation and the protection and application of their rights. We will avoid treating people affected by emergencies simply as victims.

### **Reinforcing local capacities**

ActionAid International believes that the individuals, families and communities with whom we work have the capacity required to confront the impact of the crisis and to overcome it. Therefore, in respecting this fact, our programmes are designed to reinforce local capacities and resources. At the same time, our approach seeks to increase the capacity of those who are responsible for emergency preparedness and response.

### **Focus on livelihoods**

Poor people's lack of access to, and control over, basic resources (e.g. land, adequate shelter, information) undermine their capacity to cope. Understanding their conditions of life is essential to reduce their vulnerability. So through our work we address people's concerns for the sustainability of their livelihoods as well as their immediate needs.

### **International dimension**

While the consequences of emergencies are felt locally, our experience has taught us that there are international dimensions to both causes and solutions. We will use our potential as an international organisation to include an international dimension to our situation analysis; draw on relevant experience and knowledge from all the countries where we work; mobilise moral and material support wherever we can; and advocate internationally for action appropriate to particular emergencies.

ActionAid International's Rights Analysis

*A rights-based analysis considers people affected by emergencies as citizens with rights and responsibilities. People have a right to protection, to human security and to assistance based on their needs.*

*Analysis of the distribution of power will inform all the elements of our rights analysis. It will also identify where and how poor people affected by disasters can increase their share of power.*

*An analysis based on rights will identify those groups of people and social sectors whose rights are severely denied, and specifically who does and who does not have access to, and control over, basic resources and services. This often reflects discriminatory policies and practices, as in countries where women's lack of entitlements to land makes them more vulnerable to disasters. Ethnicity, gender, generation and disability become high priorities in emergencies.*

*We will look at how gender roles and relations and patterns of discrimination make women more vulnerable, while undermining their capacity to cope with the effects of emergencies. For example, we will analyse the dynamics of sexual violence and human trafficking so that they are addressed by emergency programming.*

*Our analysis will identify the responsibilities of people and institutions at all levels (individuals, families, local and national governments, regional bodies and international actors), and their capacities to uphold such responsibilities.*

*A sound analysis of the existing international, national and local legal and governance systems is central to ActionAid International's approach, since they establish clear obligations on states and non-state actors to guarantee human security and poor people's assistance and protection.*

*We will examine how people affected by disasters, particularly the most marginalised, can be actively involved in assessments, decision-making, and negotiation of their rights with other stakeholders.*

*A rights analysis addresses both the tensions and synergies between power, culture and rights.*

## **2 Context**

The world has seen many disasters in the last decade arising from natural causes as well as human actions. Earthquakes and cyclones may be natural disasters but human action plays a significant role in reducing or increasing their impacts – particularly on the poor people across the world – e.g. whether the houses are earthquake resistant or not or whether there was adequate human response in terms of rescue and rehabilitation which would enable poor people to recover. Sometimes the disasters are a direct result of human actions – such as in violent conflicts. Others such as famine can be avoided if the people across the world have a political will to respond.

More than ever before, people across the world are connected with each other and the impact of their actions goes far beyond the nation states in which they live. The recent spread of SARs is only one such example – where the modern technology of air travel led to the spread of the virus in countries much beyond its origin. Modern technology, such as the internet or television, and the expansion of multinational corporations has created a world market and connected people as never before. Globalisation has created new problems and challenges as well as presented new opportunities for the humankind to create a more humane world. It is

in this overarching context of globalisation that we need to locate the World's current problems that cause disasters and wherein lie their solutions.

The problems associated with globalisation arise out of the unequal world where poverty and affluence reside side by side within and across nations; where the military might of a few nations has the power to dictate the rest of the World; where multinationals and multilateral financial institutions such as IMF and World Bank dominate national economies; where local cultures have been under pressure from modern technology (through communications as well as processes of urbanization and the world market) at the best creating new hybrid cultures, while at the worst creating fundamentalism, an outcome of the processes of alienation<sup>1</sup>.

This interdependence has not led to stronger, more democratic, transparent and accountable multilateral forms of governance to ensure the protection of human rights of ordinary citizens across the world. The attack on Iraq by the US and its allies in April 2003 without the sanction of United Nations has set a new political context for the world that we inhabit. The attack has undermined the multilateral agreements across nation states under the UN giving way to dangerous precedents of unilateralism and impunity by a few nations. These actions show that the human kind is regressing to the new rule of laws of jungle where brute force prevails over everything else. The World is today polarized in a new way – based on principles of intolerance and exclusion of a large number of nation states and its peoples from any say in the new World Order. The universal human rights that progressive movements had won through the nineteenth and the twentieth century – the right to life, the right to liberty, the right to live with dignity and a cultural plurality that respects these universal rights, as indicated in several UN led multilateral declarations – the Human Rights Declarations, are under a backlash from the actions of US hegemony, as well as terrorist groups, where power is used without legitimacy.

Identity based movements within nation states across the world have pointed out to the new forms of inclusion and exclusion of certain identities. Certain identity led movements such as those based on gender, class, race, have enabled us to broaden the notion of human rights to the previously discriminated against and excluded groups such as women, workers, coloured people leading to celebrating the plurality of different identities within the commonality of universality of human identity. However other identity based movements have also sought to affirm human identity based on sectarian grounds by politicizing faith and religion leading to a backlash of religious fundamentalism on the people belonging to different faiths in these nation states. The demonisation of Islam by the Western World, and Hindu fundamentalist forces within countries such as India must be seen within this broader context where new forces seek to gain hegemony and the centre stage of world power.

Such a World creates increased vulnerability and risks for the poor. Further, their basic rights are severely threatened with nation states withdrawing from their responsibility to uphold the basic welfare of their people – health, education, right to work. Life threatening illnesses such as HIV/AIDs do not receive adequate state support and civil society response although the survival of large sections of humanity affected by it is at stake. The degradation of natural resources has created new forms of survival crisis for the poor in the world who depend upon them for their subsistence. New forms of conflict – namely over the control of natural

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<sup>1</sup> See Slavoz Zizek, "Multiculturalism, Or, the Cultural Logic of Multinational Capitalism", New Left Review, sept/oct 1997.

resources are evident across the world.

This new world, however, has also opened up unprecedented opportunities for human beings to respond to distress and express solidarity with each other's concerns across nation states. This was evident during the recent US led Iraq war where civil society in different nation states took up protests and demonstrations against it. These demonstrations show a nascent growth of notions of "inclusive citizenship" much beyond the national borders. Just as the Women's Movement, Workers Movement, and Black Movement in the past have helped us create a more inclusive notion of human being, human rights and justice, so these new mobilizations indicate a dissent with the current world order and call everyone concerned to rally around the concept of "citizenship" based on global civil society. Although the World has a long way to go till it identifies itself and responds sensitively to all kinds of human distresses and all manifestations of poverty, it is with this new consciousness that lies the future of a democratic, accountable and just global governance. And it is for this reason, that Action Aid International positions itself firmly with such movements and engages itself in the creation of a more humane and just world order.

### 3. Goals

**We work for the security of poor and marginalised people and the protection of their human rights in emergencies.**

To achieve this we will work to 4 specific goals for reducing risk:

#### **Goal 1 Hazards**

To reduce the hazards, such as conflict and the environmental consequences of human activity that threaten poor and marginalized people

#### **Goal 2 People**

To reduce poor people's vulnerability by empowering them to build their resilience and to develop their capacity to cope

#### **Goal 3 Institutions**

To reduce people's vulnerability by promoting institutions that uphold their responsibilities to protect people in emergencies

#### **Goal 4 Response**

That poor people are assured of appropriate assistance to survive and recover from emergencies

### Scope

We will undertake emergencies work anywhere where we are sure that we have something to add to situation. Whilst this will mainly be in countries where we already work, we will also work across borders from our existing presence. We will be prepared to work in new areas but only in partnership with organisations that have an existing presence there.

We will increase the amount of work we do with people affected by conflict and with displaced people, building on our experience in psychosocial programmes and human trafficking. We will use our distinctive competence to raise and address HIV/AIDS and food aid issues in emergencies. In treating emergencies as opportunities to initiate positive change, we will particularly focus on the empowerment of women.

### Structures

The responsibility and accountability for emergency work will be with country programmes. Country programmes are responsible for ensuring that their teams have adequate capacity and planning to respond to emergencies. The International Secretariat (IS) will manage an International Emergencies Team (IET) with members in different regions. The IET will assist country programmes with programme design, capacity building and fundraising, and assist policy and campaign teams to raise emergency issues in their work. IET will carry out advocacy on issues specific to emergencies. The IET will account to the IS for progress and revision of this strategy. The IS will ensure that staff are supported by human resources policies appropriate to emergencies.

Goal 1

To reduce the **hazards**, such as conflict and the environmental consequences of human activity that threaten poor people

Emergencies occur when people have insufficient capacity to cope with the impact of disastrous events. The potential for such events can be recognised before they occur in the form of hazards. Hazards may be natural phenomena, such as earthquakes, or they may be man-made, such as conflicts or economic collapse. Even natural hazards may be increased by human activity, for example flooding increasing as a result of global warming or land degradation.

Our goal is that the extent and frequency of hazards be reduced whenever possible. That may be by local mobilisation of communities to prevent environmental damage that will increase the likelihood of flooding, or to promote action such as reforestation that will reduce the chance of landslides. We will also carry out advocacy internationally to address some of the causes of hazards, like climate change.

To do this we will maintain analysis and vigilance, both in the countries where we are present, and internationally. We will monitor the policies, actions and neglect by governments, multilateral institutions, companies and non-state organisations.

Our work to prevent violent conflict, or to address its underlying causes will also contribute to this goal. Our policy on violent conflict and framework for addressing it is set out in an associated document, but this goal of reducing hazards corresponds broadly to the work on the causes of conflict.

Goal 2

To reduce poor **people's** vulnerability by empowering them to build their resilience and develop their capacity to cope

The extent of impact in emergencies depends on the vulnerability of the people affected. Vulnerability is a combination of many factors that differ for individuals, communities, and for particular groups of people. Vulnerability is not the same as poverty, but the two concepts are closely related. Poor and marginalized people are generally much more vulnerable than others. They have limited access to resources, services and protection, which they need to realise their rights. That leaves them vulnerable both in the face of immediate crisis, and in their subsequent efforts to recover.

Our work will help people to become more resilient and so to survive and recover from emergencies. To do this we will use participatory vulnerability analysis to inform our on-going programmes of work with communities. We will undertake activities that will mitigate the effects of emergencies. These will include:

- Helping communities to become more organised and so strengthen their own capacities to cope
- Strengthening local food security mechanisms such as seed banks,

- Helping poor families to build reserves of food, cash or animals so that they can survive difficult times, and to strengthen their houses or stabilise their land so that their lives and livelihoods are less vulnerable.
- Promoting early warning systems.

**Goal 3**

To reduce people's vulnerability by promoting **institutions** that uphold their responsibilities to protect people in emergencies

Peoples' rights in emergencies should be protected by institutions within communities, in local and national governments, and by regional or international institutions such as the United Nations. If the whole spectrum of organisations is working effectively people will be much less vulnerable. Two factors are critical, the political will for effective action, and sufficient capacity to exercise that will. This is clearly the case in a few countries where emergencies have been effectively addressed by governments. However most poor people do not benefit from adequate protection and there is enormous room for improvement.

We will address all levels of institution, but with particular emphasis on governments. We will use social audit methods to help people analyse the capacity and political will of institutions. Informed by this and other forms of analysis we will:

- Advocate and mobilise poor people to call for greater accountability and improved governance
- Work with institutions to help them build their capacity
- Promote transparency in decisions that relate to emergencies
- Work to protect the rights of displaced people in the policies and practice of institutions

In conflict, much of the dynamics that can increase or decrease the levels of violence are the responsibilities of institutions. The conflict policy explains how our work will support the positive and fight the negative dynamics, and this corresponds broadly to Goals 2 and particularly to Goal 3 of the emergency Strategy.

**Goal 4**

That poor people are assured of appropriate assistance to survive and recover from emergencies

Even with all the work to reduce hazards and vulnerability, we recognise that emergencies will still occur. When they do, poor and marginalized people should be assured of appropriate assistance, not just to survive, but also to recover. So we will respond to emergencies, directly or with partners, designing programmes that are consistent with our strengths and values, and appropriate to the local situation. We view emergencies as times of change and so of opportunity. We will try to capitalise on the opportunity by using the emergency programmes to bring about the changes we are seeking to end poverty. Thus, when local committees are formed to manage emergency assistance we will take the opportunity to empower women by encouraging them to take part and to receive training.

HIV/AIDS is often a factor in emergencies, either because of the particular vulnerability of households affected, or because of the increased risk of transmission. We will build on our distinctive competence and profile to address HIV/AIDS related issues in emergencies.

In addition to our own response, we will support efforts to promote adequate and appropriate response by others. We will carry out direct advocacy or support communities to call on donors to allocate adequate resources. We will seek to influence the prevailing norms of the emergency relief community to be more responsive and respectful of the needs of poor and marginalized people.

We will promote our view of appropriate response, that being:

- To take account of peoples rights and dignity,
- To provide sufficient quality and quantity of timely assistance,
- To use contextual analysis to inform programme design
- To link the emergency to development,
- To build upon local capacity to cope and recover
- To recognise and use the opportunities that the emergency presents.
- To assist livelihoods as well as life-saving
- To encourage the people affected to take part in the decisions and management of assistance

There are some situations where peoples’ long-term conditions are so bad that they constitute “continuous emergencies”. Though the solutions to these situations will only be found through development, there is a need to consider some emergency approaches in the work. We will explore this concept further to see how emergency process may contribute to development practice.

#### **4. Strategies**

##### **i. Analysis**

Good contextual analysis is the pre-requisite for any rights based work on emergencies. Our strategy is to include an analysis of hazards and vulnerability into the poverty analysis that informs all ActionAid International’s programmes, whether in policy or operations. We will also systematically analyse the opportunities presented by emergencies and by other programmes for improved emergency mitigation.

Our analysis of emergency situations (see box) will include:

- The gender implications,
- The social, political and environmental context
- What rights people have, what rights are being denied, and to whom they are denied

We will use Participatory Vulnerability Analysis to promote understanding and action in communities, and inform the analysis of decision makers with the insights from community level analysis.

## **ii. Advocacy**

We will address the causes of emergencies, by raising issues of policy and practice. We recognise the importance of the policies and practice of all those with responsibilities in managing or causing emergencies. We will advocate for improvements in policies and practices to achieve the goals of this strategy. Our advocacy positions will be informed by our experience of work with poor and marginalized people. We will use our international structure and identity to address the international aspects of emergencies, whether specific to particular events, or in general.

We shall use our analysis to influence the understanding and application of this body of knowledge. We will bring a greater Southern perspective to the international debates, even working to shift them to the South.

## **iii. Mobilisation and partnership**

Actionaid International believes that we will only see eradication of poverty through the active agency of poor people. Thus, to change the policies and practice that dictate the causes, mitigation and response to emergencies, ActionAid International will mobilise poor and marginalized people to act in their own interests and promote action by civil society.

We will establish partnerships to work with a wide range of other organisations and institutions to carry out work towards these goals. Whatever work we do with others we will seek to build relations that will lead to longer term partnerships.

## **iv. Direct action**

We will fund, staff and manage emergency work using our capacity, experience and local knowledge to contribute to the overall effort by local people, their institutions and other international organisations. We will use local people and resources as far as possible, and make full use of experienced staff by asking them to work on emergency programmes outside their home countries or regions.

We will avoid doing work in emergencies that creates unwarranted harm in the longer term or wider area.

We will be transparent about our work to the people affected by emergencies and to donors

## **v. Capacity Building**

We will learn from our experience and that of our peers and ensure that the benefit of our learning is included in new initiatives. We will use (Accountability, Learning and Planning System) ALPS to achieve this.

We will seek through our programmes to help to build the capacities of communities and institutions so that they are better able to cope or protect peoples' rights in emergencies.

ActionAid International staff will develop their understanding of humanitarian principles and of the rights of people in emergencies

## **vi. Communications and fundraising**

We will raise additional funds for emergency work locally and internationally through supporter appeals, joint appeals with other agencies and from international donors.

We will develop partnership agreements with key emergency donors to facilitate quick negotiation of funding.

We will maintain a fund that will allow rapid allocation of money for emergencies

where country reserves are inadequate.

Our communications work during emergencies will be based on accurate and up-to-date information from the field and an analysis that includes an international perspective. We will disseminate information quickly and effectively.

We will engage with local and international press and media during emergencies and use the opportunity to raise longer term issues of prevention and recovery, as well as rights and poverty.

## **5 Process of developing this strategy**

This is the second Actionaid Emergencies Strategy. The first, informed by Taking Stock, was approved in 2000 to run for three years.

In 2001/2002 an independent consultant and five country programmes carried out a study of the impact of ActionAid emergencies work, with additional case studies from several other countries. The study recognised the value of a long-term approach and highlighted the importance of analysis in effective programming. The conclusion was that, at best, our work was innovative and effective, but that the quality and adherence to ActionAid's Emergency Strategy was still inconsistent. The report was validated by an external consultant who pointed out the perceived weakness of our emergency work in conflict situations.

Independent evaluations of DEC appeals examined ActionAid work in Mozambique, Orissa, Gujarat and Goma. The DEC evaluations looked at ActionAid work as part of a broader effort by UK agencies, recognising relative quality and distinction. The conclusion was that ActionAid work meets the standards of the sector, and that when we take our distinct rights based approach, we add quality to the sector.

The ActionAid annual report for 2001 drew on country review and reflections to show the we had made a real difference to poor and marginalized people with our emergencies work.

From these studies we conclude that we our right to continue to follow a rights approach to emergencies work, but with more consistency, improving analysis, and a greater recognition of conflict.

In January 2002 the International Directors, recognising a growing distinction in the ActionAid approach to emergencies, requested the Emergencies Unit to examine the possibility of increasing the scale of ActionAid emergency work, and if appropriate, to submit a proposal to do so. An analysis of trends in the emergency sector was prepared for the process by a policy analyst from Bangladesh. There then followed extensive discussion both inside and outside the organisation, and a written consultation process with staff in all Alliance members and offices. A proposal was submitted to the International Directors and approved in May 2003. The process highlighted the growing importance of policy work as a part of emergency programming, and of the value of additional expertise brought in to support offices in emergencies.

In 2002-3 the Alliance Working Group on Emergencies prepared a document setting out the Alliance Approach to Emergencies. Staff from five Alliance members were

involved, including people from Africa and Asia. The Approach document informed this strategy paper.

This strategy was mainly prepared in Nepal in May 2003 by 28 members of the Actionaid Alliance Emergency Network. The team included staff from country programmes in all regions and from three Alliance partners, including the Director of ActionAid Hellas, and the ActionAid Country Director for the Great Lakes. Partner organisations, human resources departments and the ActionAid Press and Media Team were also represented. The ActionAid International Directors were all invited to the meeting, as were Directors of Alliance members.

The process at the meeting involved a broad scoping of the international context of emergencies, informed by a paper of current trends prepared in 2002 for the scaling-up process. We looked at lessons and experience from the previous strategy, and identified the key developments that needed to be included. For example: the international dimension of every emergency was emphasised; the increasing emphasis of our work on conflict, security and justice; and the importance of HIV/AIDS to emergency work. Our existing focus on rights based analysis for emergency work remains, but with a greater emphasis on protection.

A drafting team involving three Alliance organisations prepared the first draft strategy, and a plenary session of the meeting went through it making detailed comments. The document was revised and reformatted in London and circulated to all country directors, all members of the Emergency Network, and to Marketing, Finance and Policy staff. A brief presentation was made to the International Directors in May 2003, and the strategy was presented for comment to all the Regional Meetings in 2003.

A final revised version, informed by the feedback received was completed on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2003 for presentation to International Directors for approval in November 2003 and for the Trustees to note in December 2003.

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|  | <b><u>Goal 1 Hazards</u></b><br>To reduce the hazards, such as conflict and the environmental consequences of human activity that threaten poor and marginalized people | <b><u>Goal 2 People</u></b><br>To reduce poor people's vulnerability by empowering them to build their resilience and to develop their capacity to cope | <b><u>Goal 3 Institutions</u></b><br>To reduce people's vulnerability by promoting institutions that uphold their responsibilities to protect people in emergencies | <b><u>Goal 4 Response</u></b><br>That poor people are assured of appropriate assistance to survive and recover from emergencies |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| <b>Analysis-</b> in policy and programme design. Includes participatory vulnerability analysis                   |   |   |   |   |
| <b>Advocacy-</b> by lobbying, papers and through campaigns   |   |   |   |   |
| <b>Mobilisation and partnership.</b> Working with communities and partner orgs to work for or push for the goals |   |   |   |   |
| <b>Direct action</b> operational programmes  |   |   |   |   |
| <b>Capacity building-</b> internal and for government or other organisations                                     |   |   |   |   |
| <b>Marketing and fundraising</b>   |   |   |   |   |