

**Mozambique** is typical of the countries in which ActionAid runs sponsorship programmes. During its long civil war ActionAid worked as a relief agency. That work kept tens of thousands of people alive but was essentially about emergency provision of aid. With peace ActionAid introduced child sponsorship. It means a steady, long-term income. Villagers are helped to plan their own development, deciding how funds are spent for the good of the whole community. Mozambique is an agricultural society and many of the people ActionAid works with are peasant farmers. They have no legal rights to their land except that they have worked their fields for generations. In today's world that makes them very insecure and ActionAid is taking action to protect land rights: to make future generations the ultimate owners of ActionAid's work.

## **MEDIA FACTSHEET ACTIONAID CHILD SPONSORSHIP**

### **Funding from sponsorship and other regular donations**

ActionAid is supported by 55,000 child sponsors who donate a minimum of £15 a month for each child they sponsor. Around 3,000 supporters sponsor more than one child. After five years many move on from sponsorship and donate to ActionAid's work in a specific country or region rather than concentrate on one child and their community. There are 60,000 of these so called 'next steps' supporters and 83,000 other regular givers.

### **How each sponsorship pound is spent**

For every £1 of sponsorship money, 80 pence goes overseas. Of the 80 pence:

- At least 70 per cent is used directly to help the sponsored child's community;
- Up to 20 per cent achieves wider impact by funding new initiatives and projects to tackle poverty;
- Up to 10 per cent is invested in sponsorship management, feedback to supporters and local administrative costs.

Twenty pence is invested in UK administration, campaigning, development education and fundraising.

### **Number of programmes**

ActionAid has been sponsoring children since British businessman, Cecil Jackson-Cole, founded the charity in 1972 helping children in India and Kenya. Today it runs child sponsorship programmes in 35 countries in Africa, Asia and the Americas.

### **Criteria for work funded by sponsorship**

- That the development programme is focused on poverty reduction in the child's community: *that it is designed to address the interlinked conditions that create poverty.*
- That the child will benefit from any expenditure: *that funds will have an impact in the area where the child lives, and that the family will have access to any initiatives.*
- That the child will have access to significant benefit within a reasonable time period: *that programmes will have initiated activities such as access to clean water, better nutrition and healthcare, education and improved economic opportunities.*
- That benefits are sustainable: *that they can be continued in the long term after ActionAid has withdrawn.*

### **How sponsorship works**

Sponsorship tackles social and economic problems in a child's community in partnership with local organisations. Experience has taught that you cannot help a child in isolation so ActionAid's work is designed to help the child, their family and community in their efforts to improve their quality of life. The whole community has access to ActionAid's development programmes. The sponsorship mechanism and the assistance ActionAid provides are always discussed with and agreed by local people. Additionally, care is taken to ensure that all children, whether sponsored or not, are involved in message collection.

Netrakona in northeast **Bangladesh** is one of the country's poorest districts with very entrenched traditions. For many girls the onset of puberty brings a social obligation to stay indoors. That traditionally means the end to an education. Using sponsorship money, ActionAid and a local partner organisation have organised self-help groups for women and girls only. They act as literacy groups, credit unions and places to share information on health care and other family issues. Learning to read and write and take charge of their own affairs has brought a radical change in many women's confidence, and helped them improve their position within their families and society.

ActionAid ran sponsorship programme in **Burundi**. During the Great Lakes conflict many families were dispersed. In the 1990s it became obvious that the situation was irretrievable in the short-term. ActionAid informed the sponsors and offered to transfer their donations to children in other countries. At the same time it used funds earmarked for emergencies to start peace and reconciliation projects, bringing Hutus and Tutsis together. In 2008, once the political situation improved, sponsorship programmes resumed.

### **How long sponsorship lasts**

Sponsorship schemes continue for as long as ActionAid works with families in an area. Individual sponsorships generally continue for at least five years. In some cases sponsorship may last until the child reaches 16 or moves away from the area.

### **How communications are managed**

Potential supporters receive a child profile pack. It contains:

- A photograph with details of the child and their community;
- Information on projects happening in the child's community;
- Information about the country and ActionAid's way of working.

Sponsors find direct feedback from the country programmes very rewarding. They receive:

- Reports from the community and programme with an overview and update on the work in the region where the child lives;
- Two personal messages a year from or about the child that report on progress and includes a personal message or drawing and background information on culture or community life;
- A new photograph of the child every two to three years.

Sponsors are encouraged to write to their sponsored child as children love receiving messages from their sponsor. They are asked not to send pictures of affluent lifestyles, of people in beachwear or to talk about their earnings, religion or politics.

Sponsors are asked not to send gifts as this can single a child out. Instead, ActionAid has a gift fund for the child's community which can be used to provide play equipment or even a party, or something else which benefits all children in that community.

### **What happens during war, conflict or mass migration**

ActionAid writes to sponsors and explains the circumstances. Sponsors are asked to continue supporting the country and are kept informed of the situation. In extreme cases they are asked to consider sponsoring children in another community where access to children and families can be maintained on a regular basis. ActionAid keeps in touch with original communities wherever possible through its emergencies aid work.

### **ActionAid's campaigns**

Approximately one third of ActionAid's child sponsors take campaigning actions as do many in the communities in which ActionAid works. Campaigning allows ActionAid to reach beyond one child and their community to tackle the injustices that affect many children. For example, sponsorship and campaigning work hand-in-hand to tackle education issues by training teachers and establishing schools, lobbying governments to provide free education for all and persuading international institutions to improve the policies and practices that keep people poor.

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