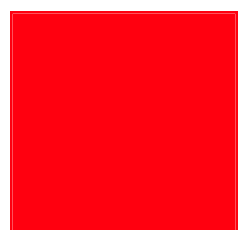
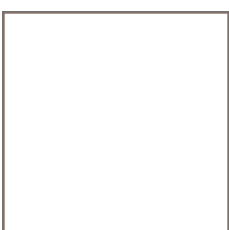
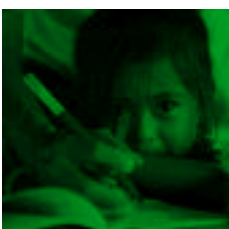
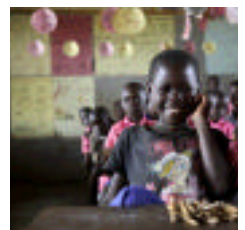
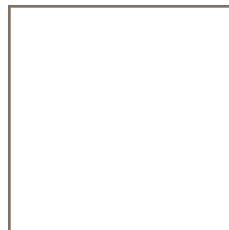
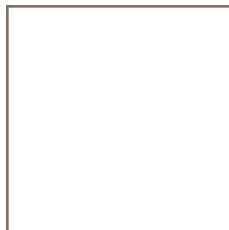
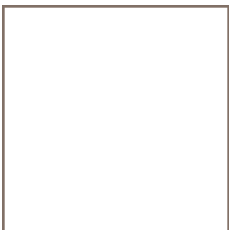


A review of ActionAid's education work
2005-2009



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Introduction

This publication brings together various documents that came out of the review of ActionAid's education work and strategy 2005-2009. The fully independent review took place in early 2009 and was coordinated by Yusuf Sayed, an external consultant and formerly head of Education for All at DFID and deputy director of the *Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report*, and Kate Newman, a consultant who has worked extensively with ActionAid's International Education Team over the last decade. It was designed to critically examine ActionAid's education work to date and draw out learning and recommendations for the way forward.

The specific objectives of the review were:

- to evaluate the impact of the international education strategy on education work in ActionAid
- to explore the impact and quality of our work at local, national and international levels
- to gather learning on how ActionAid has been working in education
- to review and deepen our accountability
- to evaluate how effectively financial resources have been secured and used to achieve the strategic objectives of our education work.

Section one of this publication is the synthesis of the findings of the independent review, based on the full report by Sayed and Newman, and the learning drawn from the three critical stories of change commissioned as part of the review. This synthesis includes some of the key findings and analysis, to give a picture of ActionAid's current work in education and the impact reported, as well as recommendations to strengthen future work.

Section two contains the response of ActionAid management to these insights and recommendations.

Section three contains in-depth and contextualised information on, and perspectives of, ActionAid's education work in different countries. This includes the full critical story of change from Sierra Leone looking at national and international advocacy with the IMF, and summaries of two other stories of change looking at campaigning on education funding in Brazil, and *Reflect* linking to campaigns in Nepal. The section also includes profiles of the education work which countries felt most represented their way of working and priorities, and a more in-depth story of partnership working in northern Nigeria.

The full review report, and fuller versions of the other material found here, can be obtained from ActionAid's International Education Team: egigayehu.summers@actionaid.org

Acknowledgements

The education review was carried out and written up by Yusuf Sayed, the external consultant and Kate Newman, the internal evaluator, with the support of three interns from Sussex University: Charlie Gordon, Ruth Tate, and Joanna Wettern. The critical stories of change were researched and written by Hannah Beardon (Sierra Leone), Iracema Nascimento (Brazil) and Basu Dev Kafle (Nepal). Both the review synthesis and this publication were compiled and edited by Hannah Beardon.

The review has sought the opinions and insights of many people across the organisation, partners and peers. The authors would like to thank all the country education leads, ActionAid staff, partners and external actors who completed the questionnaire, agreed to be interviewed and responded to requests for information. In particular, the authors would like to thank:

- the country programmes and education leads who made time and support available for the in-depth visits and critical stories of change (Bangladesh, Brazil, Malawi, Sierra Leone, Nepal and Nigeria)
- members of the International Education Team who always engaged with the work, and David Archer in particular for his critical advice and unstinting support for the evaluation
- Melanie Rieder and Toby Marks who worked for a short time as interns on the evaluation.



Glossary

ALPS	ActionAid's accountability, learning and planning system
ANCEFA	Africa Network Campaign on Education for All
ASPBAE	Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education
CEF	Commonwealth Education Fund
CLADE	Campaña Latinoamericana por el Derecho a la Educación
CSO	civil society organisation
DFID	Department for International Development
EFA	Education for All
EGBENN	Enhancing girls' basic education in northern Nigeria
ELBAG	(ActionAid programme for) economic literacy and budget accountability in governance
FUNDEB	Brazilian Fund for Education
GCAP	Global Call against Poverty
GCE	Global Campaign for Education
GNECC	Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition
GWA	Global Week of Action
IET	International Education Team
IES	international education strategy
ILOPS	Improving Learning Outcomes in Primary Schools
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
PTA	parent-teacher association
PVA	participatory vulnerability analysis
R2EP	<i>Rights to end poverty</i> – ActionAid's strategy 2005-2010
Reflect	A participatory approach to adult learning and empowerment championed by ActionAid
SLTU	Sierra Leone teachers' union
SMC	school management committee
TEGINT	Transforming Education for Girls in Nigeria and Tanzania
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VAG(S)	Violence Against Girls (in Schools)



Executive summary

The education review

The education review took place between December 2008 and June 2009 and employed a range of quantitative and qualitative methodologies to explore the views of ActionAid staff, partners and other education actors on the impact of the international education strategy (IES) and gather information on the range of education work taking place across the organisation. The review team was pleased to find consistent support for education work, but it was also clear from the review that there are various gaps, missed opportunities and challenges as the IES is translated into practice.

Taking a principled and process-based approach to working on education rights is not straightforward. There are tensions and compromises to be made by everyone involved, whether this relates to managing diverse expectations, making partnerships work or balancing fast-paced international advocacy and long-term grassroots capacity building. It takes time to build skills and confidence to undertake such work, and choices need to be made along the way. The diversity of education work within and between countries is great; both in terms of whom ActionAid works with and the types of work the organisation is involved in. On the one hand, the breadth of experience in education is impressive and suggests that programmes respond well to local need. However, the review also found that the decentralised nature of ActionAid, and the complex ways in which strategies and priorities are made and linked, has resulted in a dilution of the education strategy and a lack of coherence across the theme. Many localised programmes have little relationship to national and international strategic goals, thereby reducing the scope of impact and possibilities for shared learning.

The recommendations listed here are aimed to enable the education theme to build from their current context and create a more coherent approach to education across the organisation, deepening the understanding and practice of a rights-based approach to education. This involves greater clarity of the roles of, and relationships between, education staff at international and country programme levels. It also requires well-crafted systems to enable mutual accountability, increased attention to monitoring and learning, and a dynamic exchange of ideas, learning, successes and challenges among the education community.

Recommendations

FUTURE FOCUS OF WORK

The review was not a consensus-building process. However, there was broad agreement around four areas of work that should be prioritised in future:

- adult literacy, including focus on *Reflect*
- education financing, including how countries can confront aid dependency
- quality education, taking on a broader framework of child rights
- early childhood care and education.

THE EDUCATION STRATEGY

The education strategy should be revised to be more focused, more target-driven and a more effective framework for developing and monitoring strategic education programmes. This strategy should be a key reference point for country programmes when developing their wider country strategies to ensure the two are consistent and linked.

- The new strategy should clarify the role of the International Education Team (IET) in relation to country programmes and the role of lead advisors in each country.
- It should include an operational plan with fundraising and capacity-building programmes.

ROLES AND RELATIONSHIPS

People working on education have relevant skills and experience for their areas of work, but these are in pockets. Roles need to complement each other, to combine different skills and build good communication and accountability within the theme.

- IET should be staffed appropriately (with more core funding) to continue to provide leadership on education and coordinate a strong and well-linked cadre of staff working at different levels.
- Country programmes engaging on education should have at least one full-time member of staff devoted to education at national level, based on a common profile. IET should support the induction and professional development of this cadre.
- ActionAid should invest in strong systems to ensure that IET responds to country programme priorities.

APPROACHES

Partners find transparency and collaboration very important in assessing the value of partnership with ActionAid and would like them to be more rooted in national civil society and work more on women's rights. The review found diverse interpretations of what a rights-based approach means in practice, specifically in relation to the role of service delivery.

- IET should facilitate a collective reflection process to agree how service delivery works within a rights-based

approach to education, specifically in relation to government schools and systems. Implementation of this approach should be part of any participatory review and reflection process.

- IET should provide guidance on how to integrate gender and power analysis into the planning, implementation and monitoring of education work.
- Different approaches to campaigning (as an extensive process) should be considered.
- IET should strengthen and invest in *Reflect*.

PARTNERSHIPS AND COALITIONS

The education theme is highly regarded for its work in coalitions, and strengthening the links between civil society and teachers' unions, at all levels. Yet these relationships are complicated, especially when one partner has more power and resources. Challenges were voiced by education leads, including skewed power relations and the related issue of partners' capacity gaps, and dealing with multiple accountability lines.

- ActionAid needs to acknowledge the tension between the roles of partner and support provider and reflect on how to make partnerships more equal. This includes specific reflection on the transformation of power, and how to adapt the Paris 21 declaration principles.
- IET should lead in defining types of partnerships and strategic alliances to strengthen education work, including actors beyond education and other INGOs.

MONITORING, REPORTING AND SHARING LEARNING

The review found that voices of national and local education staff and partners need to be stronger in education planning and campaigning. Systematic monitoring, reporting and sharing of learning are central to this.

- IET should develop systems to ensure that information about education work is available centrally. This will involve building staff capacity to identify and document relevant issues. Knowledge relevant to ActionAid's wider aims should systematically be identified and shared.
- IET should develop a monitoring framework with common indicators for tracking aspects of a right-based approach to education.

SUSTAINABLE AND FLEXIBLE FUNDING

In many countries there is little connection between funding planning and education programme planning. This is further complicated by the fact that most education lead staff sit within policy teams, separate from education programmes.

- Education leads should be involved in the national budget process for local education programmes.
- Education staff should develop funding plans – including areas seeking external funding – as part of their annual plan; international funding should build from national plans.
- Programmes receiving funds from child sponsorship should review and report how this contributes to children accessing their right to education.

The management response

Overall, the international directors and IET felt that the review was an excellent investment of time and money, giving them valuable and critical insights to help shape the future direction of ActionAid's education work. They agreed that education is one of ActionAid's strongest and best-known areas of work; yet there were gaps to be addressed, and our education work could contribute more to the wider organisation.

The management response takes each cluster of recommendations from the synthesis report, highlighting and indicating the management team's level of agreement and any actions to be taken. It also highlights some areas that the review did not illuminate as clearly, including:

- cost effectiveness and the nature and impact of expenditure decisions and patterns
- work in Northern countries – for example, supporting development aid budget advocacy in the UK, Ireland, Italy and Greece
- the impact of ActionAid's internationalisation process on education work, and how to respond to this as national boards develop
- progress against the strategic objectives, which should be picked up more strongly in the *Taking Stock* organisational review.

Overall, the proposed response in terms of future work and priorities will be to unite ActionAid's education work under the banner of *education for social change*, which implies a transformation of power relations, including gender. The management response picks up the following three core focus areas for ActionAid's future education strategy:

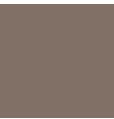
- promoting quality schools which respect child rights (and contribute to social change)
- rebuilding *Reflect* for women's literacy and empowerment (for social change)
- securing financing to achieve quality education (for social change).

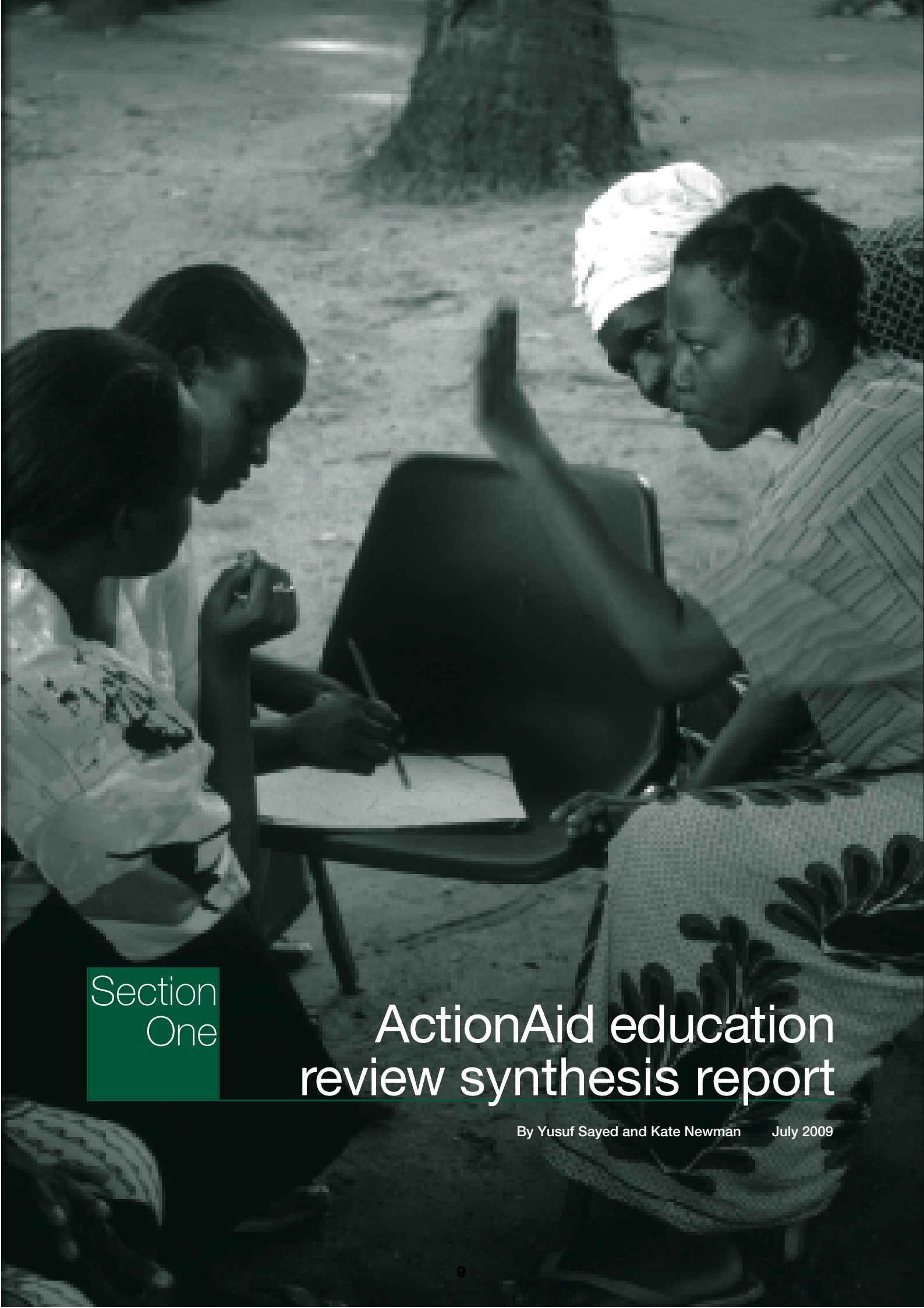
More work will be done to define how this will work in practice, and spell out the roles and responsibilities of national and international education staff in delivering on this new framework. Many of the practicalities will depend on the wider international management team's feedback, budget decisions and responses to the wider review process being undertaken in 2010.

Stories of ActionAid's education work

The review process included three in-depth country studies and three critical stories of change, to explore the work of ActionAid's education staff and partners in more detail, and in context. For the critical stories, external consultants visited projects, facilitated reflections among key actors and wrote stories highlighting the impact, as well as the complexity and challenges, of the work. The stories selected were:

- advocacy on the role of the IMF in education financing in *Sierra Leone*, to explore how an international research programme was interpreted and implemented at national level
- the national education coalition in *Brazil*, to look at how a national coalition can be well rooted and successful
- *Reflect* work with Dalit groups in *Nepal*, to understand how identity-based movements can emerge and be sustained.

 Further information was provided by country education leads to highlight the education work that is most representative of their approach and priorities. These are summarised in Section three.



Section
One

ActionAid education review synthesis report

By Yusuf Sayed and Kate Newman July 2009



Part one Introduction and background

“Education is the thing ActionAid is best at. It should be the heart of ActionAid; it is ActionAid’s unique selling point. Education underpins all the other issues – like sustainability, population growth, women’s rights – all these can be tackled ethically through education. To make long-term, sustained changes, education is key.”

ActionAid UK staff member

1.1 This document

This document is a synthesis of the Education Review – based on the report written by Yusuf Sayed, the external review coordinator, and Kate Newman, the internal review coordinator, with the support of three interns from Sussex University: Charlie Gordon, Ruth Tate, and Joanna Wetheren – and the learning drawn from the three critical stories of change that were developed as part of the review. This synthesis includes some of the key findings and analysis, to give a picture of ActionAid’s current work in education and the impact reported, as well as recommendations to strengthen future work. More detailed information and analysis can be found in the initial report, available from IET (contact egigayehu.summers@actionaid.org).

1.2 ActionAid International

ActionAid is an international NGO with a federal structure and an international secretariat led from Johannesburg. At the time of the Review, ActionAid had a presence in 49 countries including 6 Northern affiliates and 43 Southern country programmes¹. Over time, all 49 programmes will become independent national organisations, directly accountable to nationally recruited boards of governors, as affiliates of ActionAid International. The organisation is largely decentralised with priority setting and programme design occurring at national and local levels, united by its strategy *Rights to end poverty: 2005-2010* (R2EP).

This structure has been designed to root ActionAid in the South, ensuring that it is led by Southern voices and able to align itself with national and global civil society activists and social movements. As part of this aim, the organisation has

embraced a rights-based approach, which puts the process – in particular working with specific groups of rights-holders – equal to the aims and the outcome. R2EP identifies six thematic areas for ActionAid’s work. Education is one these, alongside women’s rights; food and hunger; HIV and AIDS; human security in conflict and emergencies; and governance. The themes are led by small international teams, located as part of the international secretariat, and linked to different staff at national level for programme implementation and policy-making. Of the 43 country programmes, 34 are working on education.

There is broad agreement among staff that ActionAid is a very person-centred organisation, which has an impact on communication flows, decision-making and accountability. ActionAid’s accountability, learning and planning system (ALPS) was developed in 2000 and is the framework for ActionAid’s accountability in all its work, including education. It *“aims to reflect the organisation’s goal of empowering the communities it works with, and puts analysis of power relations and a commitment to addressing rights – particularly women’s rights – at the heart of all [its] processes”*².

1.3 ActionAid’s International Education Team

Education work across ActionAid is led and supported by IET. The team came into being at the beginning of the current strategy period in 2005, but there has always been a central unit to support education work in the organisation. In the words of one team member:

“IET has three roles: externally, in its relationships with partners, its policy and advocacy work – it is very good at this; internally, as a team of high-skilled expertise which can be called on to support fundraising, monitoring and evaluation, documentation of good practice, campaign strategies, research; and working with the organisation, which IET is not so good at.”

IET fluctuated in size during the review period and currently has 4.8 core staff, with 2.8 members based in London, one in Senegal and another in India. The team links to education leads in the countries that have prioritised education in their strategy. Education leads are mainly recruited at national level and there is no systematic involvement of IET in this or the induction process. Likewise, job descriptions, performance indicators, professional development and career progression are all determined nationally.

The questionnaires and country visits found that staff are very appreciative of the responsive and supportive relationship they have with IET. In the words of one education lead:

¹ This number has since increased.

² P. 5, ActionAid International (2006) ALPS: Accountability, Learning and Planning System, ActionAid International. Accessed, 09/03/09: http://www.actionaid.org/assets/pdf/ALPSENGGLISH2006FINAL_14FEB06.pdf

"I have a very good working relationship with IET. I have been supported with my induction and whenever I have problems in a particular area I'm always assisted timely. When I require materials they have been sent to me on time and I have also been supported in campaign strategy development. They have been supportive in profiling the work we are doing – for example, in education financing and the HIV and AIDS behavioural change project for teachers."

(Malawi education lead)

This reflects responses from other education leads, which showed that IET's most valued functions are the production of resources and training programmes and facilitating the sharing of lessons and experiences.

The international education strategy: a rights-based approach to education

ActionAid's current strategy, Rights to end poverty, states that: *"The focus of all our work is to ensure that the rights of poor and excluded people are respected, promoted, protected and fulfilled and they are our primary stakeholders. We also direct unrelenting attention on the responsibility, both of the state and of other powerful institutions and individuals, in respecting, promoting, protecting and fulfilling the rights of poor and excluded people."*

This rights-based approach underpins the international education strategy (IES), which serves to articulate the goals, vision and mission of ActionAid's education work. The IES interprets the rights-based approach as follows: *"Education is a fundamental human right, the responsibility of the state and a core element of a development policy committed to social justice. Our vision for education is that all children will have free access to quality education within an equitable system. We want to see schools where children's rights, especially those of girls, are respected, injustices are challenged and children's lives can be transformed Education is part of the DNA of ActionAid. We are widely recognised as one of the leading*

international NGOs in the field of education and often regarded as the leading international NGO."

IET provided practical guidance on adapting the rights-based approach to education work, working with the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) to produce *Education rights: a resource pack for practitioners and activists*. This uses the 4A framework developed by Katarina Tomasevski – that education rights should be **available, accessible, adaptable** and **acceptable** – and looks at how this applies to work with different actors, including:

- *poor and marginalised communities* – by strengthening their capacity to define and secure their rights
- *government and the international community* – by ensuring they uphold their obligations
- *NGOs and other civil society actors* – by ensuring they use their power to strengthen the relationship between people and their government.

The pack is a key reference for ActionAid's education theme in terms of understanding and implementing a rights-based approach to education. Because the pack was published with the GCE, many other education activists use it. This enables ActionAid to share its interpretation of a rights-based approach to education and enhances the influence of their approach.

1.4 This review

The review took place between December 2008 and June 2009 and was coordinated by Yusuf Sayed (external lead consultant) and Kate Newman (internal lead consultant). It was designed to critically examine ActionAid's education work to date and draw out learning and recommendations for the way forward. The review itself was an organisational requirement, but the timing was chosen to ensure that ActionAid could integrate learning in the last year of its strategy period and begin the process of revising and strengthening its work in education.

Key elements of the IES

The strategy lists six strategic goals:

- 1 To secure constitutional rights to basic education and ensure they are enforceable in practice.
- 2 To work with excluded groups to secure free access to quality education as a basic right.
- 3 To secure adequate resources from governments and donors to ensure effective delivery of education for all.
- 4 To secure sustained and meaningful citizen participation at local and national levels, and increase the transparency, accountability and responsiveness of education systems.
- 5 To secure schools that respect all children's rights and provide education that is empowering, relevant and of good quality.
- 6 To challenge the reduction of the EFA agenda to primary schooling and ensure balanced investment in early child-hood education, adult learning and secondary education.

Its three operational goals are:

- 1 To strengthen internal organisation and capacity.
- 2 To strengthen policy, research, campaigning and coalition-building work on education at all levels.
- 3 To build strong linkages to the other five priority themes of ActionAid.

The review objectives:

- To evaluate the impact of the IES on education work in ActionAid.
- To explore the impact and quality of our work at local, national and international levels.
- To gather learning on how ActionAid has been working in education.
- To review and deepen our accountability.
- To evaluate how effectively financial resources have been secured and used to achieve the strategic objectives of our education work.

Methodology

The review was formative rather than summative: it sought to understand ActionAid's education work and identify areas for improvement and challenges that need to be addressed. In addition to analysing ActionAid documentation, the review sought to bring in diverse perspectives through a range of activities:

Questionnaires: To explore education work at country level, four questionnaires were distributed to all countries where ActionAid runs education programmes. These gathered perspectives from country education leads, national and local education partners and other education actors at national level. A series of community facilitation exercises were also developed. The country education leads identified relevant respondents and administered the questionnaires. Data requested was both quantitative and qualitative, and designed to provide insights into:

- key areas of education work
- external relationships
- how work in education, including rights-based approaches, is understood
- perspectives on ActionAid's IES, which included comments on the coherence between local-national and international work.

The return rate for the lead education questionnaire was good (from 28 of 34 countries), though feedback from local partners via questionnaires (17 received from 11 countries) and facilitated reflection exercises (carried out in only two countries) was very low. No information at all was obtained from Afghanistan, Cameroon, Haiti, Lesotho, South Africa or Zimbabwe.

In-depth country and project reviews: To further explore some of the issues and dynamics, get a clearer picture of different types of education work and bring in some external perspectives, various sub-reviews were commissioned. These were:

- Three **critical stories of change**, to illustrate different dimensions of ActionAid's work in education. External consultants visited projects, facilitated reflections among key actors and wrote stories highlighting the impact, as well as the complexity and challenges, of the work. The stories selected were:
 - advocacy on the role of the IMF in education financing in *Sierra Leone*, to explore how an international research programme was interpreted

and implemented at national level

- the national education coalition in *Brazil*, to look at how a national coalition can be well rooted and successful
- *Reflect* work with Dalit groups in *Nepal*, to understand how identity-based movements can emerge and be sustained.
- In-depth **country reviews**, carried out by external consultants on the education programmes in *Nigeria*, *Bangladesh* and *Malawi*, to complement and add depth to the information obtained through the other means. The reviews aimed to: reflect on how ActionAid understands and implements its rights-based approach to education; understand the relationships and dynamics behind ActionAid's education work in these countries; and explore the impact and effectiveness of the work.
- Two **visits by ActionAid UK trustees**, one to *Uganda* to trial the survey tools, and one to *Ghana*.

Interviews: As well as the interviews that took place as part of the in-depth reviews, the team also interviewed international education staff and some of their peers and colleagues from within and outside the organisation. These included:

- 16 ActionAid staff from outside of the education team to get a picture of the way education relates to and communicates with the wider organisation
- 18 people from other NGOs, donors, research and policy institutes to see what they think of ActionAid's education work and its impact
- 5 IET staff and others who are directly linked to the team to review and explore understandings of their work and that of ActionAid education more generally.

Limitations

The team faced various limitations in the review process. To some extent, these were due to the lack of central data systems or shared knowledge across the organisation concerning what education programmes were actually being implemented at national or local level.

There were also several limitations in relation to the data collection processes for the review. Much of the information collected is self-reported, and most of the external respondents were selected by ActionAid education staff. The level of involvement, and potential influence, of education leads in selecting and supporting their partners and peers to respond to the surveys has an impact on the data collected. Furthermore, there is a wide discrepancy in the depth of information provided by different countries and different levels, potentially skewing the data further. In particular, the low level of return for local-level questionnaires and reflections is significant to the findings and analysis. There are also issues concerning different interpretations of the questionnaire, which mean that at times the data gives rise to more questions than answers.

It is important to note however, that it was felt that the process of administering the questionnaires would enable education leads to understand more about the education work happening within their country and encourage greater reflection on the strategy and its implementation. Furthermore, the results from the in-depth country reviews could be used to triangulate and compare information received.



Part two The current picture

2.1 The range of ActionAid's work on education

Given the decentralised nature of ActionAid, education priorities are set at the local level. Thus, while there is central guidance for education, such as the IES, there are also individual country and regional education commitments. This section highlights some of the education work as shared through the review mechanisms.³ It shows great diversity both within and between countries. On the one hand, the breadth of experience in education is impressive and suggests that programmes respond well to locally specific need. However, it is also problematic that many localised programmes have little relationship to national and international strategic goals, thereby reducing coherence, impact and shared learning.

Division of labour in education

The majority of education leads spend more time on national work than local-level work, although the picture is varied. Many Asian programmes spend more time on local work, for example. Overall, less time is spent on international work, with the exception of India and Senegal.

Grassroots level

ActionAid's education work at the grassroots is a mixture of work on rights awareness and campaigning, and provision of, or support to, local education services. Local work to secure education rights includes: campaigning; mobilising and awareness raising; capacity building for participation in education governance; budget tracking with community groups and media; promoting a rights-based approach to education; publishing materials; and influencing the work and approach of other actors.

Community organising is a social process to translate a rights-based approach into local people's language and practice. ActionAid Cambodia works in remote and excluded areas where people are unaware that education services are the state's obligation. The process has strengthened local people's understanding of the government's role and responsibilities and helped them demand accountability, teachers and schools from the government. Success has led to space for 100 children to go to school. The number of children benefiting from the programme is small, but it makes a huge contribution to cultivating hope and encouraging other communities in the process of demanding state accountability and responsiveness.

This example from *Cambodia* shows how a focus on rights and governance can have tangible and sustainable results: In this example from *Nepal*, the use of *Reflect* for empowerment and participation in governance is directly linked to children accessing their right to education:

Reflect has sensitised communities to education and encouraged them to send children to school. In many cases, discussion about government provision of scholarships for girls and Dalit children has led to these communities claiming their rights and increasing access to scholarship entitlements. *Reflect* participants have stood for school management committee (SMC) election and influenced decisions in favour of rights-deprived groups – for example, ending user fees. The enrolment of children from marginalised communities has increased as a result.

From *The Gambia* comes an example of a campaign to ensure that the education system meets local needs:

In partnership with The Gambia Teachers' Union and Parents Teacher Associations (PTAs), a campaign was run to enable rural schools to decide on when to open and close school in the year. It was a cry from the parents that they did not need long Christmas and Easter breaks, but preferred to have long summer/ rainy season holidays for their children.

Providing services: At the same time, in many places ActionAid is involved in delivering local education services. For example, 14 countries are involved in supporting school construction and 18 in providing equipment. This quote from *Somaliland* gives an example of the type of services ActionAid provides to strengthen local education:

ActionAid Somaliland trains teachers in both public and non-formal primary schools. Training is given to trainers working in regional education offices, covering: lesson planning; use of local materials as teaching aids; participatory child-friendly techniques; etc. ActionAid Somaliland has built the teaching capacity of more than 200 teachers in the past three years.

This example from *Sierra Leone* shows how service delivery is not necessarily at odds with a rights-based understanding of education as the responsibility of government:

Poor communities with very limited knowledge of their rights have been empowered to be vibrant and take the lead in agitating for facilities such as schools, health centres, water and toilet facilities. The stride to ensure that these schools are recognised by government and that teachers are put on the government's payroll is a strength we want to build on to ensure that all schools meet the required standard and that quality is ensured at all times.

³ The questionnaire asked education leads to describe their best education programme or work – the answers are the source of these examples.

Links with other themes: The link between education and women's rights is strong, especially in Africa. This includes work on violence against girls, building alliances for girls' education and supporting girls' clubs, and in the case of 13 countries who responded, conducting research into issues in girls' education. Many of the education leads also report being involved in HIV and AIDS work as part of their education programme, although examples were not given. This example from *Malawi* shows the range of work bringing a women's rights perspective to their education work, and how this has influenced others:

ActionAid Malawi conducted research and raised awareness on the issue of violence against girls in school, which mobilised civil society organisations to take up the issue at local level. A readmission policy was developed to get teen mothers back to school and ActionAid has been very active in raising awareness on this policy and monitoring its implementation. ActionAid has also supported the formation of mothers' groups to support and advise girls and their parents, handle cases of violence against girls, link needy girls to the social welfare office for bursaries and raise funds to support poor girls' basic needs. ActionAid helped to make schools girl-friendly through the provision of adequate girls' toilets and desks and the SMCs have used these examples to advocate for better environments in other schools.

This example from *Uganda* shows how ActionAid's education work adapts to different contexts; in this case ensuring children's right to education is upheld even in conflict:

ActionAid was deeply engaged in advocating for the education rights of children displaced by war in northern Uganda. Efforts started in 2003 by mobilising the district education actors in war-affected districts and creating a loose network of advocates. Through the initiative, a strong platform for education in conflict called the Northern Region Education Forum was formed of district civil servants and other actors. The forum is now a fully registered NGO. The strength of the forum was the concrete data that was collected and used for advocacy. This resulted in a unified and integrated approach to education delivery from ministries – such as defence, education, health and gender – as well as donor agencies. Examinations were for the first time flown to the actual exam centres and the policy on educationally disadvantaged children was strengthened to include children in conflict.

This example from *Bangladesh* shows how the education theme has been able to connect in a practical way with food security campaign issues:

ActionAid has launched an integrated development campaign in Bangladesh to combat the *monga* (seasonal famine). As part of the Hunger Free Campaign, the education theme has launched a midday school meal pilot project in two selected schools in *monga*-prone areas.

Adult literacy: This is an important area of work, with a growing number of countries involved in promoting women's literacy, and 13 countries involved in collecting evidence on the state of adult literacy. This example is from *Brazil*:

The Landless Workers' Movement in Maranhão state established a partnership with the state government to teach young people and adults in agrarian reform camp areas to read and write, based on a successful methodology from Cuba, influenced by Paulo Freire's work.

Nevertheless, *Reflect* is still the best-known and most widely used approach to adult literacy in ActionAid. In *Mozambique*, *Reflect* facilitators are subsidised by the Ministry of Education, and this example from *Vietnam* shows how *Reflect* is integrated with other formal and non-formal approaches to adult literacy:

ActionAid Vietnam has been running its adult literacy and community development programme using the *Reflect* approach since 2000. So far, the programme has reached more than 12,000 people, mostly ethnic minority women, and 97 village community development clubs have been formed from *Reflect* circles. Six women *Reflect* participants have become members of commune people's councils and many others have become active members of local organisations such as women unions, youth unions, etc. *Reflect* has been adopted by 11 donors and INGOs and a training pack on *Reflect* was authorised by the Ministry of Education and Training.

Table 1 EXAMPLES OF EDUCATION WORK AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

	High involvement 2008	Some involvement 2008	2005 ⁴
LOCAL WORK WITH PRIMARY SCHOOLS			
Support/training to PTAs/ SMCs	14	7	18
Support teacher training	10	8	18
VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS			
Awareness-raising	13	7	16
Alliance-building	6	10	15
Supporting girls' clubs in schools	7	9	10
HIV AND EDUCATION			
Challenging stigma and discrimination	5	9	11
Using publications to raise awareness	5	8	10
ADULT LITERACY / REFLECT			
Implementing <i>Reflect</i>	12	6	19
Supporting women's literacy	10	10	16
Supporting training programmes	11	7	14
SUPPORTING EDUCATION RIGHTS			
Raising awareness of education rights	17	6	20
Publishing on education rights	7	10	11
CAMPAIGNING			
Campaigning/ mobilising/ working with village education committees	11	8	11
BEYOND PRIMARY EDUCATION			
Providing youth programmes	5	6	6
Providing other adult education	5	5	7
Providing early childhood development/education	1	8	4
BUDGET WORK / EDUCATION FINANCING			
Work with communities on the education budget	4	10	8
Campaigning for more funding for education	6	8	12
Tracking local budget utilisation	5	6	8

⁴ For 2005, countries stated if they were involved in this area of work or not. Thus there is no differentiation between highly involved or involved.

National level

At national level, education work revolves around campaigning and policy influence, including work with education campaign coalitions and research and campaigning on specific issues such as financing and women's rights. In 2008, 15 of the 24 countries that responded were engaged in advocating for greater resources for education at national level; eight were involved in campaigning against user fees; and eight were involved in the research linking the influence of the IMF's macroeconomic conditions to education financing, especially teachers. The following examples illustrate a variety of campaign issues:

Pakistan: girls' education

Fiery speeches denouncing female education have led to a major catastrophe in the female education sector. This campaign mobilises the local community and civil society organisations to ensure the government takes immediate measures to resume and rehabilitate girls' schools in conflict situations.

West Africa: financing adult education

A campaign organised in three countries (Senegal, Guinea, Mali) to influence their governments to increase the budget allocated to adult education from 1% or less to 3% of the total education budget. The campaign took advantage of the arrival of the international meeting on literacy, which brought the global adult education community to Bamako, Mali.

India: promoting access to education

ActionAid has been campaigning in Madhya Pradesh to end hidden user fees in government schools. This campaign has been supported by work with the state media to raise awareness of the Right to Education Bill and child rights.

Coalition building: ActionAid has been committed to building education coalitions since the run-up to the Dakar World Education Forum in 2000 and has consistently supported coalition work. This was extended through the Commonwealth Education Fund (CEF), and there is currently a strong focus on: working with and facilitating campaign coalitions; building the capacity of coalitions and their civil society members; providing funding and technical support; and influencing the agenda. This example from *Ghana* shows how support to coalitions can lead to stronger capacity, collaboration and linkages at all levels:

In 2000 the Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition (GNECC) was established, and ActionAid provided technical and financial support to get the network registered and buttressed at regional and district level. In 2003, with the support of CEF, the GNECC recruited staff for the secretariat and established teams to engage in district-level advocacy and ensure that adequate resources were allocated at that level to support primary education. At national level, the coalition served on committees of the Ministry of Education. The activities of the GNECC highlighted the plight of rural schoolchildren, which led to gaps in quality education being discussed in the media and political parties having to defend their manifestos with regards to ensuring quality education for the ordinary Ghanaian child. Through collaborative efforts, we have succeeded over the past eight years in ensuring that quality education remains high on the government's agenda, and contributed to the introduction of the capitation grant, which provides fee-free education.

Budget advocacy: Local-level budget tracking is widespread in order for SMCs and other community groups to monitor spending and hold education service providers to account. Work on the national budget aims to ensure that policy commitments are reflected in spending priorities, as well as conducting research to support budget tracking and accountability at both local and national levels. The work typically includes capacity building, engaging with parliament and media, lobbying the Ministry of Finance and undertaking research. This example from Pakistan shows the linkages between budget tracking, research and advocacy at local and national levels:

To prepare for a campaign to ensure appropriate levels of education funding in Pakistan, ActionAid and the Institute of Social and Policy Studies launched district education budget tracking research to provide strong evidence for budget advocacy and increased investment in education. The research aimed to address budgetary processes, underinvestment and the absence of policy levers for the required resource allocation, which have resulted in missing budget lines, delays in fiscal transfers, poor spending capacities and transparency issues at the district level. Data collection is now complete and plans to launch a campaign were underway. Following that, local partners will be given capacity building on budget tracking in their districts.

Another example comes from a national education partner in *Nigeria*:

ActionAid carried out a budget tracking training programme and this has helped us to acquire skills that have enabled us track the education budget both at the national and state levels. We have also had roundtable discussions / policy dialogues on key education issues and carried out step-down training for our members.

Table 2 EXAMPLES OF EDUCATION WORK AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

AREA OF WORK	High involvement 2008	Some involvement 2008	2005 ⁵
COALITION BUILDING			
Develop/ strengthen a national education coalition	11	10	20
Funding a coalition	10	7	16
Influencing the agenda of a coalition	8	9	16
Capacity building for a coalition	7	9	15
BUDGET WORK / EDUCATION FINANCING			
Campaigning for more education funding	9	6	13
Research on specific budget issues	6	7	8
Influencing the education budget formulation	6	6	9
Working with parliamentarians	6	5	14
WORKING WITH TEACHER UNIONS			
Meetings with unions	6	9	13
Developing joint work	5	4	6
ENGAGING WITH THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION			
Policy dialogue on specific issues	9	4	12
Contributing to education sector reviews	7	5	9
Bringing grassroots voices to national discussions	6	10	14
VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS			
Alliance-building	8	8	12
Awareness-raising	7	10	12
Research	4	9	9
HIV AND EDUCATION			
Challenging stigma and discrimination	4	6	7
Using IET publications to raise awareness	1	8	7
Influencing Ministry of Education policies	4	1	6
ADULT LITERACY / REFLECT			
Promoting adult literacy international benchmarks	7	6	7
Supporting training programmes	6	7	12
Influencing national policies	6	6	10
EDUCATION RIGHTS			
Raising awareness of education rights	11	8	17
Working with the national constitution	9	4	16
Publishing materials about education rights	8	8	12
ENGAGING WITH DONORS			
Linking to the donor consortium	3	5	9
Regular meetings with specific donor	1	7	8

⁵ For 2005, countries stated if they were involved in this area of work or not. Thus there is no differentiation between highly involved or involved.

International policy work and multi-country projects

Education work at international level is coordinated by IET and includes:

- international policy advocacy work, which may or may not relate to work taking place at national level
- multi-country projects where IET has raised specific funding to pursue and learn from innovative work implemented at national level across several countries.

Policy advocacy work includes work on education financing and the role of the IMF and influencing the adult literacy agenda. Members of IET are also active in a number of international fora, including the GCE, High Level Group and the EFA Working Group.

Multi-country projects include:

The Commonwealth Education Fund (CEF) was launched in March 2002, with support from DFID, to promote free primary education and facilitate local-level advocacy and lobbying. It operated in 16 poor Commonwealth countries in Africa and Asia – Bangladesh, Cameroon, the Gambia, Ghana, India, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. CEF aimed to create a social and political environment in which education could become the number one national priority for developing nations. It was jointly managed by Save the Children, Oxfam and ActionAid from 2002-2008 with a secretariat in the UK (now being phased out).

Transforming education for girls in Nigeria and Tanzania (TEGINT) is a special grant of about £4m from Comic Relief for promoting girls' education in Nigeria and Tanzania.

Improving Learning Outcomes in Primary Schools (ILOPS) was a one-year grant supported by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation for work in Burundi, Malawi, Senegal and Uganda. It aimed at contributing to improved learning outcomes in selected primary schools through the active participation of parents, teachers and other key actors. This project has contributed to capacity building of ActionAid staff and partners who participated in the widely shared research, which set a baseline for future projects.

The Stop Violence against Girls in School Project was launched in July 2008 in Ghana, Kenya and Mozambique with Big Lottery funding. By 2013, the project aims to achieve: a legal and policy framework that specifically addresses violence against girls in school (VAGS) in the project countries; a statistically verifiable reduction in violence against girls; an increase in girls' enrolment and retention in project areas; and an increase in girls reporting the confidence to challenge the culture of VAGS.

Table 3 NATIONAL LEVEL EDUCATION CAMPAIGNING WORK

Issue	Countries	Illustrative example
Girls' education	Mozambique, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Malawi, Pakistan, Tanzania	Campaign on girls' education in conflict: This campaign mobilises the local community and civil society organisations (CSOs) to influence the government to take immediate measures in resuming girls' education and rehabilitating girls' schools (ActionAid Pakistan).
Access and inclusive education	Ethiopia, Nepal, Ghana, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Brazil, Uganda	Back to school, stay in school campaign: This campaign was launched by the national coalition and UNICEF. A follow-up campaign for the Global Week for Action, it mainly targets children in the conflict-affected north who are returning from internal displacement camps, supporting them get back to and stay in school (ActionAid Uganda).
Education financing / funding	Brazil, Senegal, Nigeria, Burundi, Ghana, Pakistan	Campaigning for the 3%: A campaign organised by three countries (Senegal, Guinea, Mali) on adult education to influence their governments to increase the budget allocated to adult education from 1 or less to 3% of the education budget. The arrival of the global education community in Bamako for international meeting on literacy was a crucial moment (ActionAid Senegal).
Global Week for Action (GWA)	Liberia, Tanzania, Senegal, Vietnam	This global campaign highlights to policy- and decision-makers that they have obligations beyond their territorial boundaries and need to demonstrate their will and commitment to achieving these obligations (ActionAid Liberia).
Legal / constitutional frameworks for education	Kenya, Guatemala, Ethiopia, India	Madhya Pradesh Siksha Abhiyan: Advocacy on ending hidden user fees in government schools and media advocacy in state on Right to Education Bill and child rights (ActionAid India).
Teacher recruitment / deployment	Burundi, Malawi, Ghana	Provision of female teachers in rural schools: The campaign has lobbied the District Education Office to post female teachers to rural schools and provide them with decent and safe accommodation (ActionAid Malawi).
Improving education quality	Burundi, Rwanda	Improving the quality of education in primary school: In partnership with districts and local PTAs, a campaign to increase retention in primary school, especially among girls (ActionAid Rwanda).
Hunger Free Campaign	Bangladesh, Mozambique	ActionAid has launched an integrated development campaign in Bangladesh to combat monga (seasonal famine). As part of Hunger free Campaign, the education theme has launched a midday school meal pilot project in selected two schools in monga-prone areas (ActionAid Bangladesh).
Flexible school calendar	The Gambia, Bangladesh	In partnership with The Gambia Teachers' Union and PTAs, a campaign to enable rural schools to decide on when to open and close school in the year. It was a cry from the parents that they did not need long Christmas and Easter breaks, but preferred long summer/rainy season holidays for their children (ActionAid The Gambia).

Cross-thematic work

Cross-thematic work has a different nature at different levels. The Sierra Leone story commissioned for this review found that connections between different issues and themes are very clear and easy to make at personal or local level, but become more complex as the issues are abstracted and bureaucracies further complicate collaboration – towards national and international policy levels. 11 of the 25 national education leads who completed the questionnaire admitted that cross-thematic linkages have been weak. Overall, the strongest linkages are with women's rights (23 out of 25 countries), followed by HIV and AIDS and governance.

Women's rights in education work

Education leads were asked how a women's rights perspective affects their education work. Responses included:

- reducing violence against girls, from campaigns to providing girls' toilets
- vocational training and information for girls
- women's literacy and empowerment, including *Reflect* and teacher training programmes
- increasing women's confidence and capacity to participate in governance of education, including mothers' groups and SMCs
- advocacy and information on women's rights, girls' education or violence against women
- including a gender lens in the planning, implementation and monitoring of all education work, and prioritising funding relationships.

In particular there is strong gender focus in education work in the Africa region. This could be because three multi-country projects (EGBENN, TEGINT and ILOPS) have a strong gender focus or due to good working relationships and compatibility of strategies between the themes. One ActionAid staff member noted that: *"There has been a healthy, robust relationship [with women's rights], maybe because of the overlap of the work. They've been supportive, and they've shared common interests."*

However, the interviewee also recognised the difficulty in maintaining strong linkages, considering the multiple pulls and dimensions of planning and prioritisation, including local partnerships and availability of funding and resources: *"It is not always easy to sell a complex feminist understanding of women's rights; this is where ActionAid comes unstuck with partners – who may not share the same beliefs or values."*

It is clear that, although external funding can be used to inspire cross-thematic work, deliberate effort needs to be made to enable these connections to happen.

2.2 Strategies and approaches to education

"We have always emphasised a critical approach to our own practice, being willing to reflect and learn so that our work is continually evolving and improving." Review terms of reference

The review showed that most country education leads feel they are meeting the operational goals of the IES to some extent, with strongest overall progress on Goal three: strengthening policy, research, campaigning and coalition building. However, over a third of them feel that they have made limited or no progress on the three goals, suggesting perhaps a lack of investment in organisational development.

One of the main objectives of the review was to understand how ActionAid's rights-based approach is being interpreted and translated into practice at national and local levels. The review found a high level of commitment to, and knowledge of, the rights-based approach among staff and partners, as these quotes from local partners demonstrate:

"The rights-based approach makes the state accountable and only this approach will provide space to organise and empower poor people." (Local partner, India)

"[Without a right-based approach] we will fail to do essential actions, will not be efficient, not relevant." (Local partner, Ghana)

Education leads demonstrated knowledge of the relevant national and international legislation to support rights-based work on education, but they also admitted gaps in their knowledge and use of regional instruments. However, on scrutiny, the shared understanding of a rights-based approach begins to show up some contradictions. For example, the near-total agreement on the inalienability of rights was contradicted by the fact that over 44% of education leads and local partners agreed that rights could be limited under certain contexts. Agreement with the strategy of affirmative action and positive discrimination to favour girls or ethnic minorities was also higher at national than local level. The following extracts from the in-depth review in Malawi show how complicated the transition to a rights-based approach can be:

The review showed a number of programmes focused on a rights-based approach at local, national and international levels, including awareness raising, women's rights in education and strengthening government accountability and citizens' participation. Malawians have long been exposed to a system of not questioning authorities but this is changing, and after capacity building people are questioning their authorities and demanding social services.

However, community expectations of ActionAid Malawi have meant that change is slow, and the shift from a service delivery to a rights-based approach initially caused conflict due to high levels of poverty and different views on child sponsorship. The communities had got used to service delivery from ActionAid and it was not easy for them to adapt to the change in approach. During focus group discussions with mothers' groups, community-based organisations and SMCs, it was learnt that people felt they were being neglected by ActionAid due to the change in approach, although they later got used to the new way of working.

The above quote illustrates the most important apparent contradiction emerging from the data: between the acceptance of a rights-based approach underpinning all education work and the continuing provision of direct services at local level. Five local education partners (23%) stated that the majority of their funding is for service delivery work and nine (41%) considered service delivery as a crucial element of a rights-based approach. Furthermore, 68% of education leads agreed that ActionAid should provide (in the last instance) education rights and services to groups who have none, as the lead from India explained: *"Perhaps [we should provide] more service delivery for specific vulnerable groups like migrant children or bridge courses for mainstreaming out-of-school children where government provision is slow to deliver."*

And the Nigeria in-depth review highlighted the community's perspective on this issue:

At the local community level, members were aware of a rights-based approach, mentioning making claims on duty bearers and holding government to account. Yet it was also evident that for the local community the rights-based approach was as much about changes to their material conditions and the provision of services as about making claims. Thus, local communities cited the building of schools, the provision of electricity transformers as material goods that changed their lives.

Furthermore, some education leads, such as in Zambia, felt that ActionAid has a moral imperative to provide services for communities in whose name funds have been raised: *"If children need to go to school and government is not able or unwilling, and if ActionAid has the means (through resources raised in the name of children), they are morally and duty-bound to give children education."*

The surveys and the in-depth country reviews reflect a sense that, although service delivery is still a part of ActionAid's education work at local level, this is not seen to be at odds with a rights-based approach. It is service delivery employed within the context of rights, as the response from Nepal explains:

"Providing service delivery does not mean anti-rights and only advocacy might not guarantee that work is rights-based. The main difference between service delivery and rights-based [work] are on three accounts: what message we give the

community; how we facilitate our discussion with the community; and what is the goal of our intervention. If services assist the community to organise and mobilise, then service provision can be integrated in our work."

Meanwhile, the response from Brazil shows the other extreme of the argument: *"[Service delivery] is not the role of ActionAid. Its role is to support social organisations to pressure the government to improve living conditions and to guarantee human rights."*

The review found that the danger of service delivery leading to, or strengthening, dependency is still a real one, and the ideal balance may still not have been struck. An ActionAid UK trustee, noted from his visit to partners in Ghana:

"Essentially the community seemed locked into a dependency/service delivery model. The focus was almost entirely on what services ActionAid could/should provide to them. There was an acknowledgment of the need to build capacity and demand their rights but there was a questioning of how effective this approach had been or could be." He reached the conclusion that: *"For the continued credibility of ActionAid Ghana and in order to maintain the trust, confidence and commitment of communities, the rights-based approach must be delivered alongside an element of service delivery."*

This view was echoed by many other voices in the review, calling for ActionAid to review its stance on service provision in education and support different, contextualised approaches to securing education rights. At the grassroots, where material needs are so evident, staff and partners working on education need support to develop a more nuanced understanding of the link between the approaches, and support for implementation. Others working in support functions such as fundraising and communications felt that more clarity about the link between services and rights would strengthen their work. One ActionAid staff member pointed out: *"It is interesting that the IET strategy is all about rights, while at the same time ActionAid builds schools all over the place, usually with really good explanations. We are still fundraising for this, and some funders, like the Isle of Mann, will only fund this."*

Examples of service delivery as a rights-based approach

ActionAid Zambia implemented a school construction project with the community, with skills transfer as a central component. Seeing the community's commitment to the project, the Ministry of Education allocated an extra classroom block. This was only possible because ActionAid and the community had done half of the work. ActionAid Zambia recognise that a rights-based approach requires honest dialogue and recognition of the fact that our government has limited resources for rural areas, but while advocacy continues at national level, children are being denied a right to education because the Ministry of Education cannot afford to build schools. Our intervention ensured that children in another area could benefit from an extra classroom block as ActionAid had already constructed one at the project site.

Examples of service delivery as a rights-based approach

ActionAid Ethiopia has been establishing Access centres in the poorest and most remote communities. Now local government bodies are taking increased responsibility for sustaining these programmes and Access has become an alternative basic education programme. Local government have been allocating resources and planning, implementing and monitoring Access; this recognition and support has been achieved as a result of ActionAid Ethiopia's continuous engagement in advocacy and lobbying work. The linkage in most areas with the formal school system has been encouraging and helped poor children to make the transition from Access centres to formal schools more easily.

modification of plans and budget appropriation.” (Local partner, India)

“The partnership has been characterised with transparency and downward accountability. It has built our organisation’s human and institutional capacities. Since the partnership, our organisation has been rated among the best in our region with good records of reporting, strengths in problem/ solutions analysis, strategic planning and we in turn are now strengthening the capacities of other NGOs.”

(Local partner, Nigeria)

However, the Nigeria country review uncovered some of the intricacies of local-level partnerships that, from the point of view of local partners, are not always equal:

2.3 Who ActionAid works with on education

This section explores the data emerging about how relationships with peers and other actors within and outside of ActionAid support the achievement of ActionAid's education objectives. ActionAid works through partnerships and in coalitions, the nature and strength of which vary widely. The data given on the types of groups that ActionAid education work focuses on shows consistency with the aim of solidarity with poor and marginalised people: women and girls are highly targeted, as are excluded groups including ethnic minorities, disabled children, people living with HIV, child labourers, illiterate adults, orphans and children who are displaced by or living in conflict and emergency situations. Context is very relevant to decisions about who to work with – for example, in Latin America there is a stronger focus on landless and marginalised farming communities while in Asia there is less focus on people living with HIV.

Local linkages

At local level, most countries report having strong links with primary schools, though less with other stages of education such as teacher training colleges and community-based organisations working on education and relevant issues. The strongest relationships were reported with local organisations and groups campaigning on education and children's rights, as well as women's groups, faith-based organisations and youth groups. However, the picture was very mixed, and there was clearly a lot of scope for relationships with community-based organisations of all kinds to be strengthened.

Overall, local education partners perceive ActionAid to be an effective organisation, a good facilitator and easy to work with. These quotes illustrate some of the experiences of partnership with ActionAid expressed by local partners:

“Our relationship is mutual and facilitative. We have the freedom and liberty to interact and negotiate with ActionAid with regard to deciding programme plans,

Partner perspectives in Nigeria

The benefits of partnership with ActionAid identified by local organisations were mainly to do with the training and capacity development support they received, including training on *Reflect*, and in some cases visits to other countries. They feel this empowered them as organisations to work effectively with local communities. One local partner stated that through ActionAid they *“learnt how to talk to big people”*. They believe that such training has collateral benefit, and they use it to secure other work. ActionAid Nigeria was described as *focused, results-orientated and getting things done*.

However, local partners also pointed out challenges in the relationship. The first was that they felt that they were not fully involved in the design of the project from inception, but brought in at a later stage. A community member stated that they first knew about ActionAid *“when they came to tell us we were selected to be part of the project”*. In addition, a key issue for local partner organisations was that they felt that they did not have full financial control and say over how monies were spent. This was manifest in statements such as *“ActionAid specified what we can spend the money on”* and *“ActionAid specifies how much we can spend on staff on this project.”*

National linkages

At national level, some of the strongest links are with NGOs involved in advocacy work on education, women's rights and children's rights. ActionAid is perceived by its national partners as an organisation that provides space for other civil society organisations and is process-orientated. Links with education ministries are generally quite constructive, although relationships with national government and parliament clearly need to be strengthened further in many countries in order to achieve effective policy advocacy.

Teachers' unions have become an important ally in many national coalitions campaigning for quality Education for All. One ActionAid staff member noted that: *“Work with teachers' unions has intensified over the strategy period, and this has influenced the education coalitions at national level; when trade unions join the education coalitions they have to look at issues differently and they become more political, and have a stronger platform/collective voice.”*

Integrating local and national partnerships

A national education partner in Bangladesh explained how ActionAid works with partners at local and national levels: *“ActionAid Bangladesh motivates local partners and other local actors to engage with the formal education system by administering various participatory advocacy tools and techniques. National level partners (not all) calibrate their policy advocacy work based on these real-life engagements, evidence, voices, etc, where ActionAid plays a lead coordination and facilitation role.”*

However, around half of countries responding claimed to have no relationship at all with teachers' unions. Furthermore, despite the extent of international focus on IMF conditionalities, there are not generally strong links with organisations working on financing issues such as debt, international finance institutions or finance ministries.

International linkages

At international level, there are strong linkages with international campaign coalitions and INGOs working on education, from country-level and IET staff. IET also has a range of relationships with different funders – including trusts in the UK and the US and DFID – and have built strong collaborative relationships for policy advocacy with NGOs and policy research organisations working on financing issues and the IMF. One respondent aptly noted *“if there were no ActionAid, no GCE, we would just have cheerleaders in the international arena”*. Another saw ActionAid as a *“critical friend asking the hard questions”* and an ally in arguments with financing institutions such as the World Bank and the Fast-Track Initiative.

However, questions were raised about the blurring of organisational boundaries between ActionAid and the coalitions of which it is a member. One respondent summed this up by saying that in some international fora *“it is not always clear where ActionAid begins and GCE ends”* – for example on the Fast Track Initiative board. Additionally, some respondents noted that *“ActionAid does not take all members along in bodies”* and that it needs need to take more fully into account the agenda and needs of other NGOs.

Challenges of multiple roles and partnerships

At both local and national level ActionAid plays multiple roles. These include being an advocate of change, and empowering and facilitating local organisations, as well as directly funding organisations and implementing projects. One staff member noted: *“ActionAid basically acts as a*

donor to CSOs: CSOs raise money from ActionAid in the same way as they would from any other funder.” There are challenges and tensions between these roles which have to be carefully and effectively managed and which require reflection and guidance across the NGO sector as a whole. Capacity building and campaigning partnerships are complicated in many cases by the issue of funding, as the Malawi Country Review noted:

ActionAid needs to recognise that where its staff are implementing a project, the partners perceive it as competition and feel ActionAid is stifling the capacity of their organisations. Therefore, ActionAid needs to balance being a donor and an implementer not only in rural communities but also in national activities.

The Nigeria review showed how the strength and power of ActionAid, while employed in the service of local communities and civil society groups, can also hinder their progress. This quote from a partner illustrated this:

We participated in the National Council for Education but for the ministry we were identified as ActionAid. While there is equality in operational and implementation matters, the major decisions about policy direction, linkages with funders are in the hands of ActionAid.

It is not easy to find the right balance between internal organisational imperative and collective aspirations, but acknowledgment and discussion is a step forward. The international initiative on CSO effectiveness is looking at a range of issues around NGO accountability and effectiveness, including how NGOs work with countries, with each other and with other partners. Given its role as a member of CEF, ActionAid has a rich history and experience to draw from to this end.

2.4 The perceived impact of ActionAid's education work

“ActionAid is like a goat, because a goat would not be satisfied grazing from one plant. It browses from different plants and sometimes from a plant it has never tasted. For me ActionAid is like a goat. It is ready enough to try new approaches.”

National education actor, Ethiopia

“ActionAid is like a dog. A dog is intelligent, defensive in the sense that it can go against the enemy when rights are denied and also announces its presence.”

National education actor, Nigeria

In general, at international level most organisations and individuals have a positive view of ActionAid's work, the calibre of its staff, its engagement in international fora and its commitment to building civil society capacity.

One respondent noted that if there was no ActionAid “*then there would be a need to invent one*”, and another said, “*ActionAid punches above its weight*”.

ActionAid and adult literacy

ActionAid is respected for its work to ensure the education development agenda is not reduced to a narrow focus on primary education. Respondents pointed to the work done on the international literacy benchmarks, participation in CONFINTEA and in the literacy working group. Specific mention was made of ActionAid’s work on *Reflect*.

Campaigning and policy work

“ActionAid is known for its position on education rights. This has helped keep the issue of rights to education strongly on the national education agenda.”

National education partner, Sierra Leone

“ActionAid plays a critical role by providing funding for both institutional capacity of coalitions and programme activities. It also provides technical assistance to members of the coalition in programme formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.”

National education partner, Ghana

IET has focused its policy work over recent years on the influence of the IMF on national education spending, making this a hot topic on the international development agenda. However, reports on the impact of this work are not so clear, and difficult to attribute. One respondent summarised the view of many by noting that the work has raised awareness and engendered advocacy and campaigning momentum across many CSOs. Others pointed to the lack of policy change and change in the reality on the ground, showing the difficulty of assessing the impact of policy advocacy work, especially at international level.

The impact of the IMF work in Sierra Leone

The critical story undertaken on this work in *Sierra Leone* showed the complexity of identifying and attributing change and impact. Some policy change was noted:

“Since the research was launched the IMF have officially dropped their promotion or condition of public sector wage bill ceilings in poor countries...Whether or not this policy change can be attributed to the work of ActionAid and other civil society organisations, it is an important shift. Nationally the work also contributed to policy change. In 2008 the Minister of Education made a public commitment to lower pupil-teacher ratios to 40:1 through increased teacher training and recruitment, as a result of broad public pressure.”

However, the study found that the policy changes were not necessarily translated into changes on the ground – the ceilings are still in place in many countries, and the pupil-teacher ratio target was reversed. The work also helped raise awareness of the role and influence of the IMF and the dynamics of policy-making, and increased both the space for civil society to engage in policy and challenge decision-makers, and the visibility and influence of ActionAid Sierra Leone.

“Policy-makers (including the IMF and government), peers and partners see ActionAid as a legitimate representative of civil society voices and concerns in the policy process. Based on this, ActionAid has been able to proactively engage in public policy and finance processes, for example working with the World Bank to get the Public Finance Monitoring Grant set up, which aims to fund civil society actors to monitor government policy and implementation.”

The story shows how national and international action can be complementary, and can open up the space for national civil society to link with different actors. However, there needs to be significant reflection on how to move from policy change to ensuring change in practice and lived reality, while sustaining motivation across the range of actors.

At national level, ActionAid has been one of the main initiators and drivers behind the formation of coalitions of NGOs, civil society movements and unions, which have brought an alternative voice into international education debates generally dominated by governments and donors. However, in relation to impact, the development of a sustainable movement was scored very low by all groups of respondents.

National education actors stress that ActionAid has made a big impact with regards to increasing their understanding of how the right to education can be met,⁶ and what a rights-based approach to education means. Impact is easier to assess at this level, as clearly the number of national coalitions has grown and those that existed previously have been strengthened, as evident in the review of the CEF.

Financing basic education – the impact of the Brazil education campaign

The critical story on the education campaign in Brazil shows how the Brazilian Campaign for the Right to Education was built, in part initiated by ActionAid to carry out focused campaigning with specific objectives to ensure “*constant national pressure for local changes to be transformed into public policies*”. The campaign includes a broad range of institutions (INGOs, national NGOs, social movements, unions, councillors and municipal managers) in 18 of Brazil’s states, in addition to a national coordination function. It played a crucial role in raising the profile of education funding at a time when the debate was largely about management, successfully influencing public education policies.

6 All 19 actors think that ActionAid has increased understanding of the right to education.

FUNDEB, the fund that provides the financing for basic education, was ratified by the Brazilian president in June 2007. Rather than criticising FUNDEB in its entirety, the campaign analysed specific elements of the proposal and offered alternatives. Optimism and confidence characterised the identity of the movement along with the aim to contribute not to complain. The impact of the campaign is clear, with the extension of the education fund to include nursery and upper secondary education, and there were many lessons learned in relation to enabling a range of actors to work together on a specific issue – for example, it was key to sustain a permanent agenda, with time limits and well-defined objectives of each stage of the proposal; the network was sustained through circulating quality information and the contribution and role of each actor was valued. A range of secondary gains also resulted from the mobilisation, including expanded relationships for education actors, stronger links with women’s rights organisations and better specific knowledge in a range of areas including education funding and education for small children.

The Brazilian focus on a concrete education-related objective contrasts with the experience in *Nepal*, where the *Reflect* approach was central in mobilising Dalits based on around the issue of their identity and in response to centuries of oppression. Moreover, *Reflect* was central in supporting the development of communication strategies, essential to the coordination of the movement as it grew nationally.

Reflect and communication for sustained campaigning in Nepal

As the Dalit rights movement evolved, the local organisations – sangams – became information centres or communication bases for the movement: they were places where Dalits could meet to debate key issues and strengthen cooperation and collective action. Through *Reflect* processes, sangam members were able to minute their meetings and disseminate agreements, produce a range of communication materials – from banners and pamphlets for public information to appeals for tenancy or education access – and access and discuss newspaper articles. These communication strategies were central to facilitating coordinated action across the region and sustaining motivation of those involved in the movement. The movement has evolved and been sustained due to its roots in *Reflect*, the key approach in supporting local-level analysis and identification of appropriate actors and strategies to extend and support a movement as it links from local to national level.

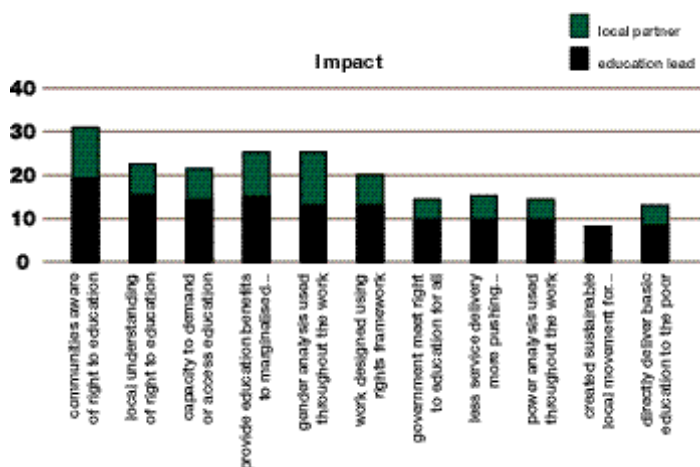
The impact of grassroots work

ActionAid’s work is perceived to have strong impact at local level, keeping issues on the education agenda, organising civil society and strengthening commitment to the marginalised. Data shows that partners appreciate ActionAid for being an organisation that creates opportunities and networks, and develops capacity building. A local partner from India stated:

“ActionAid’s approach has been to strengthen communities to lead a rights-based fight, which is unique and most effective compared to other organisations working in the field of education which primarily focus on service delivery... ActionAid strengthens the capacities of community groups and organisations through various trainings and inputs and facilitates...their fight, so that it is realised by themselves.”

However, the impact on the ability of governments to meet their responsibilities to provide education is less obvious to partners on the ground. Table 4 shows the most frequently mentioned areas of impact of ActionAid’s education work at local and national levels, as identified by ActionAid staff and local partners.

Table 4 IMPACT OF LOCAL WORK ACCORDING TO EDUCATION LEADS AND LOCAL PARTNERS



Though positive impact is constantly noted, many respondents find it difficult to make the connection between ActionAid’s work and visible differences in the material conditions of communities. It is possible, as the review team noted in the case of *Nigeria* and other country visits, that people may become more aware of their rights; but for this to translate into changing material conditions not only takes time but also depends on other changes taking place alongside. Generally, it was also of concern that the perceived impact of building sustainable movements – which would continue to secure education rights once ActionAid turned its attention elsewhere – was low at both local and national levels.



Part three

Developing a strong coherent programme

The review confirmed that ActionAid has huge breadth of experience in education work across the majority of its country programmes, and there is strong support and admiration for the education theme across the organisation. The work also has a strong reputation externally. No one questioned the overall focus of education work or the rights-based approach. However, there is evidence that the decentralised nature of ActionAid, and the complex ways in which strategies and priorities are set and linkages made, have resulted in a dilution of the education strategy and a lack of coherence across the theme. This section draws together data on future priorities for education leads, along with different perspectives on ActionAid's strengths and roles in education rights, to set the basis for the recommendations on ways forward in Part four of this section.

3.1 Setting national education priorities

The review showed that the focus and content of work varies from country to country, and decisions on education work and what should be prioritised and what should be dropped, are driven not only by the IES, but also by local strategies, priorities and partnerships. The box below shows the range of issues which come into play when staff develops plans and budgets for national and local education work.

Added to these planning issues is the lack of systematic reporting, knowledge management and sharing across the education theme, which means that local programmes often operate in isolation. The review found that there are a variety of concerns around the impact of this lack of coherence and linkage, including:

- National and international initiatives are not easily designed to build on and extend local work, or to systematically learn from and improve education programming. Neither is local programming designed to build on or support national advocacy initiatives. This creates a disjuncture between policy changes achieved at international or national level and changes in the actual experiences of people living in poverty.
- While ActionAid's reputation for education work is mainly built on IET's advocacy and communication work, their high-level engagement on education policy has become detached from everyday programme issues, which require different operational knowledge and expertise.
- There is a lack of common understanding of ActionAid's political position and role in achieving education rights for all, specifically in relation to national governments, and how this informs advocacy efforts at every level.
- The interpretation and translation of the rights-based approach is not consistent. At local level the challenges of poverty, community expectations and the weak capacity of partners and government further complicate this, yet the communication and exchange mechanisms are not there to support people trying to adapt the approach.

While the decentralised structure of ActionAid makes the achievement of coherence and linkages more challenging, the review also noted that ActionAid's current structure and coverage give it great potential to enhance its impact at every level.

Influences on national priority setting

The following quotes show some of the complexities, contextual issues and conflicting pressures, which influence the choices, and priorities of national level education staff:

Context and partners:

- "ActionAid Brazil has always worked on education issues aligned with the objectives of Brazilian Campaign for Right to Education."
- "This was a formative stage of thematic work and strategies were evolving based on our existing work with development areas and CEF initiatives." (India)
- "We started our work around constitutional rights in 2005 but since late 2006 nothing could be done as there was no parliament." (Bangladesh)

Lack of resources and capacity:

- "Because we don't have enough staff to work on the education theme we focus on primary education in the new five-year strategy." (China)
- "There is a lack of information and expertise available for [strategic goal 3]." (Ethiopia)
- "Due to limited resources, we have been largely focusing on basic education to the expense of adult learning and early childhood education." (Tanzania)

Competing interests:

- "There was practically very little implementation of education programmes on the ground... resources from other themes were mobilised for the food and hunger campaign." (The Gambia)
- "In 2005, even though one of our strategic objectives for education work in ActionAid Nigeria was making education a justiciable right, we couldn't direct our activities to it because we were strictly implementing donor-focused projects."

3.2 Future directions for education work

While the IES is a strong interpretation of the rights-based approach in education work, the review found that it is in effect too broad and open to interpretation to enable country programmes to develop strong, strategic and well-monitored education programmes. In fact, 22% of education leads responding to the questionnaire had not read or used the strategy, and the majority do not discuss their education programme with IET. Education staff at every level are over-stretched and expected to play many different roles, drawing on a range of skills that are unlikely to be held by one person.

ActionAid needs to decide how much to continue supporting local diversity and flexibility in education programming and how to develop coherent themes of work. Even given the preference for locally-led planning there is a need to develop a more strategic sense of the opportunities that are both important to pursue and fit most effectively with ActionAid’s work programme. There is clearly a need for an IES which builds on, supports, connects, inspires and provides a guiding narrative for ActionAid’s education work at all levels. This should build from the future directions and priorities emerging from the review.

The future priorities, programme ideas and strategies mentioned by national ActionAid staff working on education varied immensely and included: work on specific issues such as early childhood education; adult literacy; HIV and AIDS; and gender; as well as specific activities such as teacher training or research, developing resources and publishing relevant material (which many education leads stated would be core to their programming over the next three years). The leads plan to work with a variety of actors including specific sections of government (national ministries, district/local education authorities) and specific marginalised groups. They also plan to continue engaging with, and strengthening, education partners and coalitions.

The steer from national actors and partners was just as varied. National partners suggested an increased focus on: adult literacy; work on education quality in the classroom, including teacher capacity; and child rights. National actors suggested that ActionAid should in the future focus on: the rights of women and specific excluded groups and the role of the private sector. They also suggested that stronger systems were necessary to link local and national work.

Internationally, the work on financing was well known and received strong support. There was also a feeling that it would be beneficial for ActionAid to reassert itself within the adult literacy debate, specifically extending its work with *Reflect*. Surprisingly, there was little synergy between what education leads identified as work they would be doing at national level and the work they wanted to be taken forward in the IES.

WORK PRIORITIES IDENTIFIED BY EDUCATION LEADS

Table 5

Rank	Issue	Countries
1	More focused work on teacher quality	10
2	Increased focus on adult literacy	8
3	Early childhood care and education	7
	Child rights, including the right to protection (boys as well as girls)	7
	Focus on education quality in the classroom	7
4	Work with specific excluded groups (indigenous, remote areas)	6
5	Secondary education	5
	Inclusive / disability education	5
6	Climate change	4
	Women’s rights	4
	Child labour	4
	Disaster risk reduction in schools	4
	Education and conflict	4
	More cross-thematic linkages	4
7	Role of the private sector	3
8	Distance education	2
9	Higher education	1

3.3 Developing a coherent and complementary body of education work

The review was not a consensus building process, so it is not surprising that it contains a range of priorities and suggestions for ActionAid to pursue in its future education work. However, there was broad agreement around the following four areas of work:

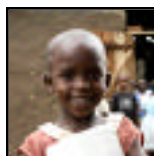
- adult literacy, including focus on *Reflect*
- education financing, including focus on how countries, especially in Africa, can confront the increasing dependency on aid
- early childhood care and education
- quality education, taking on a broader framework of child rights.

To build on this basis further, the review team suggest a set of principles to apply in developing future work programmes and strategies, which are set out in the Part four of this section. If ActionAid is to capitalise on its current position in education it needs to ensure that it has a strongly articulated position on its role and function in achieving education rights for all. It should be relevant and appropriate to the diverse contexts in which ActionAid works and should provide a strong framework in which to develop coherent, complementary and strategic education programmes. Moreover, this unified approach to education should give meaning to the right to education and clearly state how education work contributes to ActionAid’s wider vision of Rights to end poverty. This will ensure that ActionAid is known for its strong, rooted, effective education programmes, as well as its presence in international fora.

Recommendations:

- The current education strategy should be revised to ensure that it is more focused, more target-driven and more effective as a framework for developing and monitoring strategic education programmes. This strategy should be a key reference point for country programmes when developing their wider country strategies to ensure the two are consistent and linked.
- The new strategy should clarify the role of IET in relation to country programmes and the role of lead advisors in each country.
- It should also include an operational plan containing fundraising and capacity building programmes.

Part four looks more specifically at how this future vision can be achieved, noting that a process of strategy development would involve mapping current capacities to ensure that the strategy is relevant, achievable and addresses the issues raised by the review.



Part four Strategies and recommendations

Strengthening the coherence and complementarity of education work across ActionAid requires moving beyond suggestions for specific activities, and building a programme of work that maximises the potential of ActionAid engagement at different levels, with all the implications that has for staffing and roles. The review recommends the following set of principles as a basis for identifying and agreeing on (up to three) specific initiatives designed to work across levels:

Principles for developing future education work

Managing different knowledge and perspectives:

While a new programme will need to build from the local perspective, it is important to frame the discussion with knowledge of what the issues are, and what will have traction nationally and internationally. This includes being aware of the different priorities and interests of civil society, donors and policy-makers. While the reality of education systems and discrimination differs widely across the areas where ActionAid works, all programmes should be designed within the 4A (accessibility, adaptability, availability and appropriateness) framework. This should enable ActionAid staff to balance local flexibility and responsiveness with a more coherent and linkable national and international agenda. It could be further facilitated by developing one common project or campaign across each region or sub-region.

Developing alternative solutions: While ActionAid has rightly criticised the direct delivery of small-scale alternative schooling models, the review finds a need for constructive engagement with government school systems through offering alternative solutions; whether this is specifically about education delivery or education policy-making more broadly. This involves investing in well-evidenced research to produce alternative policies, and suggests a more collaborative advocacy and campaigning style (see *Brazil* critical story of change, where one example involves engaging government in exploring creative ways of mobilising and utilising resources to achieve the right to education for all).

Thinking about sustainability and capacity: Careful planning is required to ensure that all work processes and methods contribute directly to building sustainable movements, which can continue to claim diverse rights when ActionAid's attention turns to other projects and communities. This involves developing an integrated advocacy/campaigning style of work at the local level, drawing on the range of participatory methodologies that ActionAid has been supporting, to campaign and build movements within a coherent rights-based framework.



Sharpening and coordinating participatory

methodologies: Underlying all participatory processes are a set of principles which involve analysing power and strengthening people's analytical and communication skills, and their capacity for action. *Reflect* is well recognised as one of ActionAid's strengths, and is key to linking these skills to literacy learning within an intensive and extensive programme. More focused investment in and use of *Reflect* should not only contribute to sustainability and local-national linkages (see *Nepal* critical story of change); it should also contribute to the evidence base for engagement in international adult education fora.

Deepening gender and power analysis: While there are many examples of education projects that focus on women and girls, there is a need to ensure that programmes are more strategically designed and implemented to tackle power relations and contribute to strengthening women's rights more generally.

The review identified the following key elements to achieving a more coherent and effective body of work in education, which are discussed in the remainder of this section:

- well defined and complementary roles within ActionAid
- clear, supported and shared approaches
- mutually supportive partnerships and coalitions
- systematic monitoring, reporting and sharing of learning
- sustainable and flexible funding.

4.1 Well defined and complementary roles within ActionAid

The current education strategy, and mix of approaches, encompasses a broad variety of capacity needs – for example, the skills, contacts and knowledge required for policy analysis and influence are quite different from those required to strengthen the participation of women in school governance. The review found that, while people working on education have the relevant skills and experience for their own areas of work, these are concentrated in pockets and do not draw on and complement each other as well as they should.

This section brings together some of the analysis and recommendations relating to staff numbers and profiles and to the building of skills and capacities to strengthen areas of work and to nurture staff commitment and retention. It also explores how staff roles interact and complement each other, to build good communication and accountability within the theme. It is clear that some of these issues are relevant to ActionAid more generally and as such could be viewed as wider organisational recommendations.

The skills mix in IET

The review recognises the critical roles played by IET in providing coherence to the work as a whole, supporting country programmes, engaging with international actors and agencies, promoting lesson learning and information sharing and collaborating with other themes. However, there was also a sense that the team is currently strongly policy-oriented at the expense of other valuable roles. What's more, some felt that the policy focus itself was too constrained to education issues, too focused internationally, and not linked effectively to wider issues concerning the organisation. In the words of the head of another theme: *"There must be more people who could talk more generally about other policy issues. There is a leadership gap when it comes to engaging with ActionAid from an education perspective."*

Although the focus and mandate of ActionAid's international thematic teams is not entirely clear, there was a feeling from staff in and outside the education theme that IET should offer more extensive programme support and have more in-depth programme knowledge, including technical understanding of programme implementation at local level and capacity building at national level on issues such as developing local education funding plans, or linking to donor consortia. One education lead noted:

"It would be good if IET had a technical person who could come and work in-country, building capacity, helping connect up the different things that are going on and giving vibrancy to the theme. There is a lot more presence of the other themes in sub-regional meetings and this influences the planning process at national level. It is motivating for the country programmes to have more support from the themes."

It was unanimously felt that the current IET is too small to service its large agenda and its varied demands. This quote from an ActionAid staff member captures some of the issues: *"The team has a high level of expertise, it has depth and breadth, but it is too small, and can't do everything it wants... They have had difficulties when they want to move something on ... or influence how programmes are designed."*

Recommendations for IET structure:

IET should continue to **provide leadership** on education across the organisation, coordinating a strong and well-linked cadre of staff working at different levels.

- 4.1.1 The precise **role of IET** should be clarified within the new or revised IES. This will include expectations in relation to international policy advocacy/representation, national capacity building, technical support and fundraising. The balance will depend on organisational expectations of the role of the international thematic teams.
- 4.1.2 The **size and skills mix** of IET needs to be increased to reflect its needs and expectations. There should be clear role profiles for all team members, directly linked

to aspects of the strategic plan, based on analysis of context, gaps and work priorities, and communicated to the wider team and organisation. The review team suggests that:

- all IET staff have a specific region or sub-region as part of their remit to strengthen the regional structure
- all IET staff be required to spend at least 25% of their time providing operational support to country programmes
- additional core funding is made available to increase the size of IET.

4.1.3 IET needs pay more attention to the needs of **the wider organisation**, sharing lessons learnt and engaging in organisational debates such as how to communicate a rights-based approach to Northern funders.

Staff capacity in country programmes

Although in there is a designated education lead person in all of the 34 countries who have prioritised education as a theme, in reality the education lead in half of these countries spends 50% or more of their time on other issues, themes or processes.⁷ While there are many reasons for this, including ActionAid's decentralised structure and inter-thematic working at country level, it clearly points to a lack of staff time at national level to support the complex education agenda. There is also divergence in the amount of time education leads spend on local-level work. Overall, the current trend is for country education leads to spend more time on national issues, even though supporting good quality local work can be very time-consuming. The review also found that most of the dedicated education leads in country programmes have been working for ActionAid for less than three years. This staff turnover results in a loss of experience, capacity and skills, and a lack of continuity in relationships with partners.

The review team noted the need for a more systematic professional development programme for education staff both to ensure continuity of relationships and capacity, and to enhance staff commitment and retention. Currently training mainly takes the form of internal workshops, which are usually initiated by IET in a fairly ad hoc manner. Furthermore, data suggests that more needs to be done to develop research capacity at the national level and integrate local researchers more fully into national and international work.

Recommendations for building national capacity:

4.1.4 Each country programme engaging with education should have at least one member of **staff at national level** dedicated explicitly to education. This role should spend 50% of its time on local education issues and supporting education programming, and the remainder

engaging with national advocacy and linking to the international team.

4.1.5 A template education **lead/team profile** should be developed for country programmes to adapt and use.

4.1.6 Time should be devoted at each **global education meeting** to professional and human resource matters.

4.1.7 IET should develop a clear **professional development plan** for its cadre, based on the new IES, which should:

- include a range of capacity building and training methods, such as clear induction procedures and a programme for inter-country exchange
- link professional development to individual education staff's work needs
- link the professional development programme to staff progression.

4.1.8 ActionAid needs to pay attention to developing more **diversified career paths**. Strategies such as secondments into international thematic teams could contribute to this.⁸

Working together on education

While different members of IET are increasingly recognised for their work externally, the education theme leader is widely seen as the public face of ActionAid. He has a long history with ActionAid, long-standing expertise in education, and intimate knowledge of *Reflect*, which he is credited with initiating. Such a rich history yields high dividends for ActionAid and education work in general, including obtaining funds for projects, wide recognition of the work and strong representation. However, some respondents felt that representation in international fora does not reflect the full range of work done at country level and some external respondents perceive ActionAid to be a single-focus organisation: "*When ActionAid speaks in meetings, we know even before they speak that it will be about IMF.*"

In order to maintain the enormous contribution made by the theme leader while enabling diverse voices and experiences to filter up through ActionAid, it is recommended that a more formal structure be developed which brings a broader cross-section of voices to speak for the education theme. The education theme also needs to improve its communication channels with the rest of ActionAid. As one staff member noted: "*The theme gets on with its own thing and does it well, but care needs to be taken that education isn't too independent for ActionAid as an organisation and the other themes to benefit.*"

For country programme experience to be communicated (internally and externally) by appropriate staff there needs to be a dynamic system which enables discussion on key education areas, agenda setting, information gathering etc. This will also ensure that the education theme has the appropriate mechanisms to work with ALPS principles, thereby strengthening its accountability and impact.

⁷ Many of the education leads from African and Asian country programmes report that they work full-time on education issues. However, the two education leads from Latin America report spending only 25% and 30% of their time on education issues, while the education lead from China devotes just 15% of their time to education.

⁸ This is outside of the remit of the IET, but relevant here.

Recommendations for greater representation:

- 4.1.9 Appoint specific education leads at sub-regional level to coordinate sharing, exchange visits and **communication between education lead staff** to strengthen links and sharing.
- 4.1.10 Develop a clear, designated role (probably in IET) to ensure that **country programme staff can influence the IET agenda**, and that IET is responsive to country-level needs and builds on national work. This role will involve facilitating and coordinating discussions, as well as collecting and communicating specific education experiences to external audiences and the wider organisation.

4.2 Clear, supported and shared approaches

Feedback from national partners showed that they find issues of transparency and collaborative approaches very important in assessing the value of partnership with ActionAid. Furthermore, they stated that they would like ActionAid to be more rooted in national civil society and work more on women's rights. These kinds of comments are important for ActionAid to consider as they plan the approach for their future work on education.

Delivering education rights – strengthening government services

While ActionAid clearly has a strong and serious commitment to taking a rights-based approach to poverty issues, and this has taken root at all levels of the organisation, the review found that the situation on the ground is more complex. There are clear differences in the way a rights-based approach to development is conceptualised in the IES, and by staff and partners at different levels. Furthermore, on the ground service delivery is still a common element of ActionAid's education work, in parallel to a rights-based approach. Working within a rights-based approach is clearly challenging on many fronts, both in terms of implementation and communication at the community level and in terms of securing appropriate funding and communication with donors. It is therefore important that any service delivery that ActionAid is involved in complements and strengthens government education provision, rather than compensating for the lack of it. As one ActionAid staff member noted:

"You can do service delivery in relation to the government education system, as a foundation for advocacy and campaigning – for example, building girls' toilets in a government school. The education rights guide laid out some of this, but doesn't really talk about how you can work with the government system."

IET has responsibility for leadership on a rights-based approach to education. Collective reflection is required to ensure that there is a shared (but not necessarily uniform)

understanding of how the rights-based approach is operationalised and implemented at the local level, including planning and funding issues. There also needs to be critical reflection on the role of service delivery in programme work, to ensure that work at community level is radical and rights-based and that service delivery contributes to strengthening the right to, and rights in, education.

Recommendations on integrating service delivery into a rights-based approach:

- 4.2.1 Building on the collective reflection mentioned above, the education theme should develop a clear framework which shows **how service delivery works within a rights-based approach**, and in particular with government systems, perhaps as part of the process of developing a new IES.
- 4.2.2 Reflection on how the rights-based approach is operationalised, what works well and how any tensions may be resolved, should be an integral part of any education **participatory review and planning process**.
- 4.2.3 These reflections should be documented and form the basis of **resource materials and capacity building** on rights-based approaches to be systematically shared at every level.

Power and gender analysis

The survey results from partners at local and national levels showed that very little emphasis is placed on power analysis at the planning stage, and there is evidence that power analysis is not sufficiently linked to planning and programming within ActionAid. Furthermore, while funds have been raised for specific projects concerning girls' education, the general approach to work seems to lack a feminist or women's rights perspective. This runs counter to ActionAid's stated aims and values as an organisation; more investment in developing a feminist perspective on education should be made in the future. A separate ActionAid internal review noted that: *"Even where the tools help us understand and address power, we often stop there, instead of building from empowered community groups to wider organisations, networks of the poor that can claim their power from local to international levels."*

Recommendations regarding power and gender analysis:

- 4.2.4 IET should provide guidance, based on *Reflect*, ALPS and the global monitoring framework, on how to integrate **gender and power analysis** into the planning, implementation and monitoring of education work. This includes indicators and methodologies for tracking change in power and gender relations.
- 4.2.5 Education staff should collaborate more closely with the women's rights theme in developing their education programme to ensure a deeper **feminist perspective**, building on the positive experience of the violence against girls in schools collaboration.

Integrated campaigning

Some respondents, including those from other NGOs and donors, felt the current approach to international policy change was too confrontational, particularly in relation to the IMF work. One national education actor in Pakistan even noted that the stance of strong solidarity with education actors at national level compromised policy influence capacity:

“ActionAid is quite absent from the major groups and committees that shape the education in the country. So their ‘holistic’ approach in education might be something that is different from other organisations, which some can consider a positive, but there are definitely some drawbacks of being a ‘jack of all trades’.”

Learning from the Sierra Leone IMF work suggests that building strong, sustainable civil society capacity to secure education rights is a very slow and involved process, and that policy change impacts may be far down the line. However, the Brazil story suggests that if attention is focused on generating specific alternative policy and solutions, collaborative campaigning can bring about policy change and links and support from beyond the education sector.

Recommendations regarding integrating campaigning work at different levels:

- 4.2.6 The education theme should consider campaigning as a **long-term, extensive** programme of work, coordinated across different levels and covering: policy engagement; key policy wins; monitoring policy implementation; and continued advocacy to ensure actual change. This includes the recognition that supporting campaigning capacity among partner organisations and involving local groups in policy advocacy entails making a choice between responding to quick-paced externally driven campaigning and slower participatory initiatives. The education theme at all levels needs to be open and honest about where it is making such choices.
- 4.2.7 The use of identity-based campaigning could be beneficial in sustaining momentum and linking education more systematically to wider rights abuses, creating a practical entry to cross-thematic work. At country programme level education staff should collaborate with other thematic staff to consider engaging with **specific excluded groups** on the basis of their identity. This will include looking at how the *Reflect* approach can stimulate the development of such campaigning, and whether education rights is a specific issue which could be taken up within any such campaign.
- 4.2.8 IET should continually strengthen their **links with research institutions** at international level, and support education leads to develop similar links at national level. This would further develop the theme’s international and national research base and increase the credibility of its advocacy work.

Participatory approaches

The survey found lots of evidence that ActionAid is still well known and respected for its work on adult literacy and empowerment using the *Reflect* approach. For example, one national education partner in Bangladesh stated that: *“The Reflect circle helped to improve the livelihood of the circle members and is also acknowledged as one of the best practices in Bangladesh.”*

However, there was also concern about the sheer number of tools and approaches developed and supported by ActionAid for grassroots work. Apart from *Reflect* there is STAR and Stepping Stones – which both focus on HIV – and participatory vulnerability analysis (PVA) focusing on disaster preparedness. The Nigeria country review, for example, noted that there were too many tools and evidence of ‘methodological framework fashions’, with people being trained in different tools as new ones are developed. There is also frequently confusion between tools, methods and programmes, as the following quote from an ActionAid staff member illustrates:

“You ask people: ‘What are you doing on women’s rights?’ They say ‘We do Reflect.’ But these are methods or tools, not a programme. I want to understand why they are doing Reflect. There are some really good exceptions. For example, listening to a young woman in Bangladesh describing how they had worked with Reflect, I understood how they were analysing power relations between women and men and then identifying concrete issues to take forward.”

Recommendations regarding tools and approaches:

- 4.2.9 IET should strengthen and invest in **Reflect** for adult literacy. It should also draw from its experience in *Reflect* to ensure that gender and power analysis are well integrated into education work, and specifically adapt *Reflect* tools to monitor change in gender and power relations.
- 4.2.10 There is a need for clear leadership and support in the use of participatory approaches – which are ultimately processes of adult education, power analysis, communication and confidence building – across ActionAid. It may be advisable for the education theme to take a lead in consolidating the different methodologies into a **coherent framework** that supports local engagement and empowerment processes and contributes to building sustainable movements.

Promoting stronger linkages

Whatever the focus, the strong message is that there need to be seamless linkages between work at different levels and that they need to nourish and complement each other. In part, this can be achieved by strengthening the links between campaigning and grassroots work – for example, building the capacity of local partners to engage in national education campaign coalitions. It was revealing to note that

almost 40% of ActionAid's national partners are not members of national EFA coalitions. The Bangladesh review found evidence of this lack of coherence:

"In Bangladesh, the support for early childhood education has clearly been a local success story. The children enrolled in [early childhood care and education] have all made the transition to primary school. However, enrolment in primary school is still followed by dropout at a later stage. Documentation in an evidence-based advocacy format is now required to influence politicians and bureaucrats in the development of the national policy on education."

The current IES suggests that education leads dedicate 25% of their time to international work, although there are no systems to ensure that this happens. There was a view that ActionAid needs to pay more attention to the regional level, supporting regional sharing and exchange, using regional rights instruments, and participating in regional events. The review noted that opportunities to engage with regional institutions such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the African Union or the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) were not well used, reflecting a perception that the theme is too centralised and its advocacy too focused on the North. Finally, the review found that staff and partners value opportunities for exchange visits more than workshops for exchanging learning and ideas.

Recommendations for stronger linkages:

Some of the issues relevant to forging stronger linkages – such as a regional focus for IET staff (4.1.3); clear role profiling at country level (4.1.6); improved communications (4.1.10); and involvement in budgeting (4.5.2) – are dealt with in other recommendations. However, we would also add that:

4.2.11 Opportunities should be created for **exchange** between IET and national staff, including secondments to IET and IET staff spending time as education advisors in country programmes.

4.2.12 IET should be systematically involved in the **recruitment and induction** of education lead staff. Their induction should also include a visit to a neighbouring country programme.

4.3 Mutually supportive partnerships and coalitions

ActionAid carries out much of its education work in conjunction with other actors – for example, partnering with local education actors to support grassroots education work, or working with national and international coalitions to develop joint campaigns and advocacy initiatives. The education theme is highly regarded for its work in coalitions, at national and international levels, such as its work with the GC E, or developing and strengthening national coalitions. In particular, ActionAid is credited with strengthening the links between civil society and teachers' unions at all levels, bringing a more political analysis of education priorities to the table.

This way of working means that the quality of ActionAid's

partnerships is closely linked to the quality and impact of its work. Yet partnerships are complicated, especially when one partner (nearly always ActionAid) or coalition member has more power, capacity and resources. Some of these challenges were voiced by country education leads; issues of common concern included skewed power relations the related issue of partners' capacity gaps, and dealing with multiple accountability lines. Other common issues relate to the difficulty of combining different agendas, approaches and values and competition for limited space. One staff member noted some of these challenges in relation to the management of multi-country projects:

"In the multi-country projects it was clear that there were research gaps at national level; people didn't have the skills in evaluation or monitoring and evaluation, there were no quantitative skills at country level, and partners were delivering very weak materials ... It is also important to recognise that they have many other valuable skills [and are] focusing on process, campaigning etc. [They] can't be expected to do everything."

Although ActionAid works to build the capacity and influence of partners, partnerships usually reflect the existing power structure, with ActionAid expecting to give technical or financial support; there was little evidence of partnerships as spaces of mutual benefit and learning. In some contexts, coalitions supported by ActionAid were seen as vehicles for furthering ActionAid's own position, rather than equal spaces for learning, support and the pursuit of mutual or complementary goals. Some people said they were unsure where ActionAid ended and a coalition began. Some partners noted difficulties in adopting a rights-based approach and voiced the feeling that ActionAid did not always consult its partners. This makes accountability relationships problematic, and limits the possibility of partners influencing ActionAid's work. One NGO noted that they would work more closely with ActionAid if they felt that there was a stronger commitment to mutual partnership.

It was also evident that the range of different relationships – formal and informal; long- and short-term; single-issue or with complex working relationships – was incredibly broad. A national partner in *Bangladesh* noted how this happens and the effect this has on the quality and impact of policy work:

"ActionAid Bangladesh does not have longer-term partnership modalities for policy work like their 10 year partnerships with local NGOs. This leads to an inclination to short-term profile building and discrete work like a roundtable, a media dialogue, a convention, a newsletter rather than long-term engagements for concrete changes."

Recommendations for more effective and equal partnerships:

Partnerships will benefit from stronger capacity for analysing and tracking power relations, as noted in recommendation 4.2.4 above.

4.3.1 ActionAid needs to acknowledge the tension between the roles of partner and support provider. In many cases education staff are directly involved in developing partnerships, especially at local level. However, as much of

the education work is delivered through partnership, IET should lead or facilitate reflection and debate on how different kinds of partnership within education – including those involving funding – can be **made more equal**. This reflection process should include analysis of the role and power of ActionAid within education coalitions.

- 4.3.2 IET should lead in defining **different types of partnerships** and exploring the types of strategic alliance and partnership which could deepen the impact of campaigning and advocacy at all levels. This may mean linking to civil society actors beyond education. Consideration should also be given to closer working with other INGOs.
- 4.3.3 Accountability mechanisms should include reflection on the **transformation of power in partnerships and coalitions** as well tracking specific indicators. This will help ActionAid learn from partners and develop and design joint interventions collaboratively, and will provide a positive and equal partnership model for others to follow.
- 4.3.4 Many of the principles of the Paris 21 declaration apply to ActionAid in its role as a funder of partners and coalitions. IET should look at which of these apply, and assess the need for ActionAid and other NGOs to develop **principles for funding relationships**. This links to the international CSO effectiveness initiative launched last year.⁹

4.4 Systematic monitoring, reporting and sharing of learning

We have already discussed the need for national and local education staff and partners to have a stronger voice in education planning and campaigning (See 4.1). In this section we explore the systems and processes which can support that shift.

Reporting, sharing learning and strengthening peer support

The lack of systems and processes for collecting and sharing data on ActionAid's education work became apparent during the review process. Without a central clearing house for information about ActionAid's education work, different countries keep information in different formats and with varying levels of detail, and access to information often depends on personal contacts. As such IET was unable to provide an up-to-date list of education leads, let alone give accurate data on ActionAid's education spending, or information on partners, types of education programming, indicators used and so on. One ActionAid staff member noted that: *"The relationship with country programmes is bizarre and opaque. It is very dependent on individuals, contacting people you know to get information or to get things done... There is no central place to go for updates, etc."*

The need for stronger reporting and sharing of learning was evident in many different areas. Clearly, staff at all levels need

to know what their colleagues are doing in order to learn, and also to build complementarity and synergy into their work plans. Section 4.2 above looks at some of the ways in which linkages can be strengthened between education staff. Sharing learning is also a key step in ensuring that IET is more responsive to country programme priorities. The call for more complete information on education work at different levels was also echoed by staff from other functions, illustrated by this quote from a member of ActionAid staff:

"There is so much that can be shown from a communication perspective regarding the right to education – following a specific school's journey, for example. You could show all the stages the head, teachers, community activists and children go through to get a school, a teacher, desks, latrines, etc; how they build a relationship with the government to get all of this. This could be part of a supporter's journey, making the rights-based approach concrete."

The types of information collected need to reflect both the priorities and interests of the context, be most effective and support the linkages they need to be comparable across different levels. It is clear from the review that more guidance and support is needed for education staff to identify and document learning, share and monitor change and impact.

Recommendations for facilitating shared learning:

See also 4.1.10 for the recommendation for regional support.

- 4.4.1 IET should plan with the shared learning function (and knowledge initiative) to ensure that information about the reality of work at local, national and international levels is **accessible centrally**, including mechanisms and procedures for regularly updating the portfolio. This should be built into role profiles and inductions of the whole education cadre (see 4.1.6).
- 4.4.2 The theme should build capacity of staff at all levels to identify and document **relevant issues for shared learning**, and develop guidelines on the types of information that should be routinely collected when designing an education intervention.
- 4.4.3 The theme should develop and extend the **audience for information** on ActionAid's education work, internally and externally, and target information products appropriately. For example small knowledge products can facilitate better sharing and joint work.
- 4.4.4 The theme should systematically share knowledge relevant to **ActionAid's wider aims and objectives**, such as coalition building, with others in the organisation.

Monitoring a rights-based approach

The review team noted that the difficulty in accessing information on education work at different levels is causing a problem for the effective use of ALPS. Participatory review and reflection processes were considered the most relevant way of

⁹ www.cso-effectiveness.org

getting information from the local level, but there is little quality control or shared understanding of what these processes entail. As a result, the quality of the information collected depends on the skills and commitment of the individuals involved. The fact that the intranet and letter writing were the least relevant means of collecting information raises a concern that an over-reliance on visits, combined with the demands on education leads' time, may impede the regular and smooth flow of information to national level. In addition, there appears to be a culture of reporting upwards, to senior staff, rather than sharing with peers, which is contradictory to ALPS.

Most education leads believe that the IES would benefit from having clear targets for education work. The review found little evidence of systematic change monitoring and indicator tracking, suggesting that the assessment of impact is subjective and ad hoc, and many opportunities for learning and identifying impact are being missed. Some indicators – such as primary school enrolment – are tracked by many countries, while others – such as indicators to track the effectiveness of coalitions or the scope of work with unions – were used less regularly. This indicates a need for guidance on the types of indicator which can help track different aspects of rights-based education work, linked to the areas of change identified in the global monitoring framework, and the need to develop approaches to monitoring and sharing which strengthen the alignment and complementarity of work at different levels. This should be in line with ALPS principles and processes; so diverse perspectives are needed to understand the work and its impact.

Recommendations for more effective monitoring:

4.4.5 As part of the strategy process, IET should develop a monitoring framework with common indicators for tracking different aspects of rights-based work to education. This should include reporting mechanisms and guidelines for collecting and using baseline data to strengthen and monitor programming. See also 4.2.4.

4.5 Sustainable and flexible funding

Although education leads were specifically asked to work with their finance directors to gather education spending data, most of them were unable to supply this for the review. This suggests that in many countries education planning is not based on financial information, which may be explained by the fact that national education thematic staff tend to sit in policy teams while programme staff implement local education work.

Education spending in ActionAid

The figures available showed that total education spend across ActionAid in 2007 was about 8% of total organisational cost. This seems low given that education is one of the organisation's six themes. In 2007 IET expenditure was £785,000 out of a total education spend of £15.7m (about 5%), which is lower than comparable

organisations. The majority of education spending is given directly to national and local partner organisations.

While differences in funding levels for education across countries reflect the decentralised nature of the organisation, and such decisions need to be made at local level, some general guidance on the level and distribution of education spending would help to manage the expectations of the theme, and the organisation more broadly, concerning capacity and involvement in education work.

Recommendation for more consistent education budgeting:

4.5.1 IET should work with country programmes to develop realistic guidance on **education spending** and staffing costs, linked to the role profiles recommended in 4.1.6.

Strategic fundraising

IET is renowned for its success in fundraising. During this strategy period the team has secured various grants for a range of work in support of R2EP, including adult literacy, disaster preparedness in schools, violence against girls and coalition building. However, concerns were raised within the organisation that the education theme does not always plan or act strategically with regards to raising funds and that it may at times adapt its work to available funding, rather than interacting with donors based on a strategic plan. One education lead argues that this can lead to IET "cajoling" countries to participate in projects after funding has been secured on their behalf, while another staff member commented:

"We need to think strategically about why we are involving and including a country in a particular process. I hate to think of us bringing in countries kicking and screaming... I know you can fundraise to stimulate things, but what I don't like is when we present a case pretending that the country has thought about it, and then we have to spend time cajoling them."

Another staff member suggested a more strategic, proactive fundraising approach: *"They could develop a 'capital' campaign for education with a strong policy agenda which runs over 2-3 years and generates £50m. This would take 6-12 months in preparation, and work with a range of donors, maybe a third or a half would be large donors and the rest smaller."*

Funders and fundraising staff also expressed concerns as to whether ActionAid had the technical capacity to manage large-scale multi-country projects, mentioning the failure to meet identified goals and the sometimes fraught relationship with countries. This is likely to be the result of ActionAid staff being overstretched. However, if project planning is built on national programmes of work, this would be less of an issue.

There is also a tendency to funding-led planning at national level. The review found that education leads usually plan their work based on an inflation-adjusted figure from the previous year, rather than choosing and costing education priorities and proactively seeking appropriate funds.

Recommendations for strategic fundraising:

- 4.5.2 Education lead staff should be **involved in national budget processes**, for local education programmes as well as their own programme of work.
- 4.5.3 Education themes should develop **funding plans** at international and national levels as part of their annual plans; these should state clearly what aspects of the work will be funded by child sponsorship and which will seek to raise additional funding.
- 4.5.4 **Fundraising at an international level should support and extend planned national programmes of work.** This implies that multi-country projects should be developed from national work and funding plans.
- 4.5.5 Consideration should be given to developing a **'capital' campaign** for education.

Education and child sponsorship

Much of the local-level education work is funded by child sponsorship and the convergence of interests is strong. As a staff member from ActionAid India stated:

"Education is a very high priority for ActionAid, partly because it fits in so well with child sponsorship... For example, at the moment children are selected from the community, and those working in child sponsorship have to explain how the whole community benefits. If a government school was sponsored then all the children would benefit."

There is a strong sense from the review that fundraising needs to be more closely integrated into the campaign and policy agenda at all levels, and child sponsorship could be a vehicle for this. However, staff also noted current tension and missed opportunities, for example:

"There doesn't seem to be much linking between development area managers and the education theme, and yet if child sponsorship and education were more integrated everyone would benefit. The disconnect is partly because the global education community are policy people, very separate from people on the ground."

The review found support across the organisation for strengthening the links between sponsorship and education to ensure that any child who is being sponsored has the right to education secured. This will not only make funding more coherent but will also provide a stronger narrative for sponsorship communications. How ActionAid interprets this within a rights-based approach depends on the answers and guidance reached in the service delivery recommendations 4.2.1-3. Whatever the interpretation, it will involve working to ensure that government schools function effectively and are accessible to all children; making such links should enable greater coherence between local and national level work.

Recommendation on linking sponsorship to education programming:

- 4.5.6 Programmes receiving funds from child sponsorship should **review and report** how this contributes to children accessing their right to education.



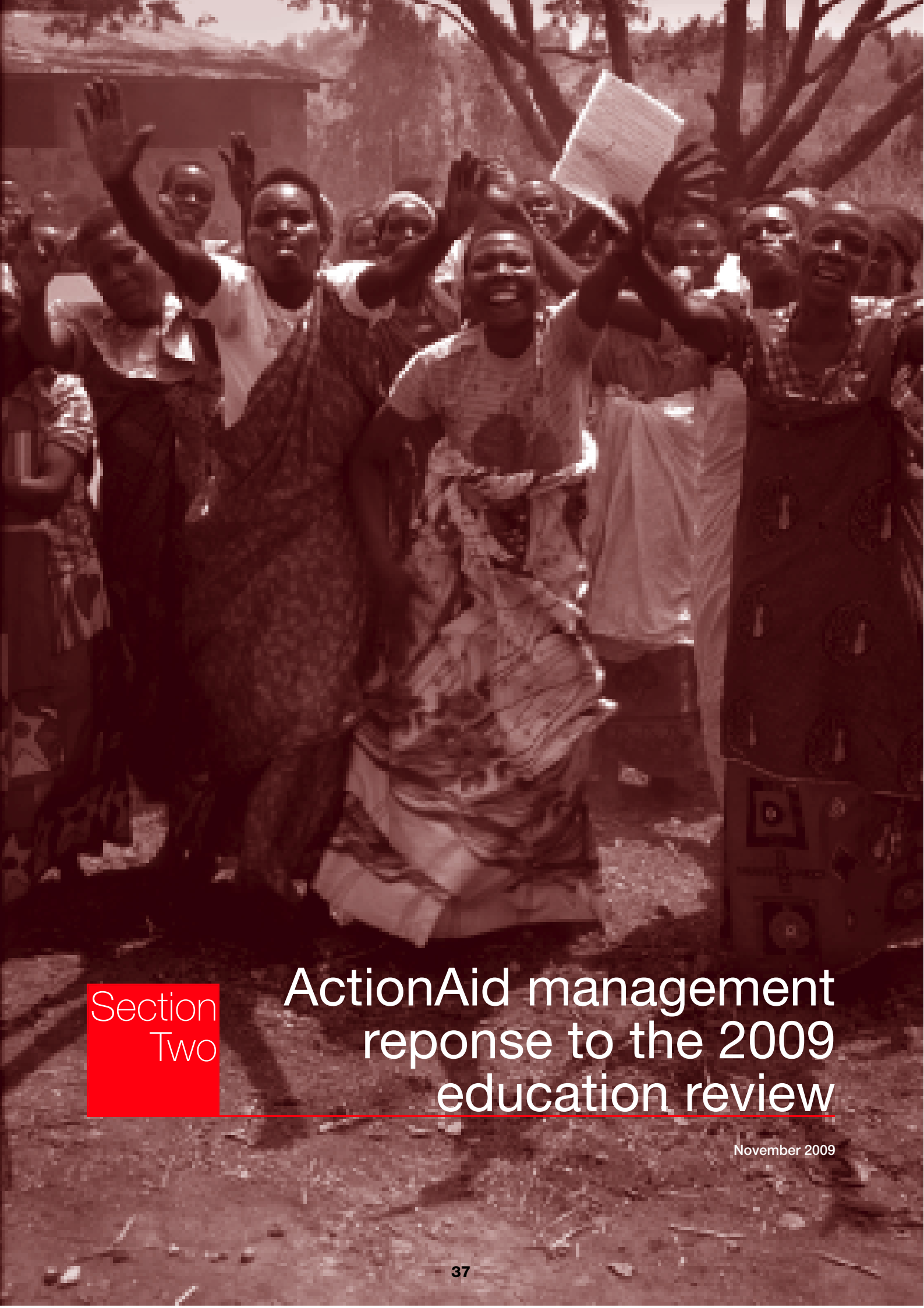
Part five Concluding remarks

ActionAid holds very strong principles relating to accountability structures and approach to work, which provided the framework by which the review team explored the organisation's education work. ActionAid has supported education work of one sort or another since its inception, partly because of its strong links with child sponsorship, and many respondents felt that education is part of ActionAid's DNA. As a team we were pleased to find such consistent support for education work, whether this was from local partners, external actors or staff members at all levels. But it was also clear that there are various gaps, missed opportunities and challenges as the IES is translated into practice.

Taking a principled and process-based approach to working on education rights is not straightforward. There are tensions and compromises to be made by everyone involved, whether this relates to diverse expectations, making partnerships work, or balancing fast-paced international advocacy and long-term grassroots capacity building. It takes time to build skills and confidence to undertake such work, and choices need to be made along the way.

The recommendations in Section 4 are aimed to enable the education theme to build from their current context and create a more coherent approach to education across the organisation, deepening understanding and practice of a rights-based approach to education. This involves greater clarity of the roles of, and relationships between, education staff at both international and country programme levels. It also involves well crafted systems to enable mutual accountability, increased attention to monitoring and learning, and a dynamic exchange of ideas, learning, successes and challenges among the education community.

ActionAid has a strong reputation internally and externally for its education work. The review process was long and involved many staff giving up considerable amounts of their time to reflect on their experience and practice. We hope that the process itself has strengthened reflective practice and that the insights, lessons and recommendations provided through this review process will enable education staff to continue to build ActionAid's reputation and collaborate meaningfully in achieving education rights for all.



Section
Two

ActionAid management reponse to the 2009 education review

November 2009

Overall, the international directors and IET feel that the education review, led by Yusuf Sayed and Kate Newman, was an excellent investment of time and money: it has given us valuable and critical insights, which will help shape the future direction of our education work.

We concur with the conclusion to the full report that says: *“Overall the review team found that education was regarded as ActionAid’s strongest and most successful theme; and the work receives strong support from actors across the development sector.”* We also echo the following: *“Education is the thing ActionAid is best at. It should be the heart of ActionAid; it is ActionAid’s unique selling point.”*¹⁰

However, we agree also with the conclusion that *“The review highlights gaps and missed opportunities in terms of how ActionAid values and invests in education, and in how the education theme relates to and collaborates with ActionAid as an organisation; and contributes to the wider organisational vision. If education is to maintain and enhance its current position of strength, this will require significant investment by ActionAid at every level. However, it is equally important that the education theme invest more in making sure that they are contributing to ActionAid achieving its wider anti-poverty goals and to developing more genuine and organic cross-thematic linkages.”*

We accept the view that over the past few years we have been too self-contained as an education theme; we have not contributed as actively or fully to the wider organisation as we could or should have done. We hope that this review will be a turning point, enabling us to deepen cross-thematic linkages and adhere more systematically to ALPS values and processes, enabling us to share learning from both our successes and our failures.

In this section, we look at each of the core clusters of recommendations from the synthesis report and highlight some key insights or quotes from the main report that we feel warrant a response. *All of these are in italics.* For each we indicate whether we agree, partly agree or disagree, and outline the actions that IET and others will take (or are already taking).

1. Recommendations on the future focus of work

1.1 The review was not a consensus-building process. However, there was broad agreement around four areas of work which should be prioritised in future:

- adult literacy, including focus on Reflect
- education financing, including how countries can confront aid dependency
- quality education, taking on a broader framework of child rights
- early childhood care and education.

MOSTLY AGREE: we feel that the present IET strategy with its six core objectives and three operational objectives is too complex and that we need a tighter focus in future. These four areas are ones that we broadly agree on, though we are wary of taking on early childhood education as a major area in itself. In our discussions with education colleagues, we feel that it makes more sense to look at strengthening our work on pre-school education but not to get too embroiled in the hugely complex area of early childhood care and education.

1.2 The full report states: *“In order to strengthen the coherence and complementarity of work at different levels it would be helpful to identify and agree on a limited number (no more than three) of specific initiatives which are designed to work across the different levels. These initiatives should be planned to maximise the potential of ActionAid engaging at these levels, recognising the specific role each can play.”*

MOSTLY AGREE: following a consultation with a selection of lead education colleagues from country level we are proposing three core focus areas in future. These will inform both programme support and policy engagement – at local, national and international levels – with an overall tendency towards greater focus on strengthening the local programme base of our education work. The proposed areas are:

- promoting quality schools which respect child rights (and contribute to social change).
- securing financing to achieve quality education (for social change)
- rebuilding *Reflect* for women’s literacy and empowerment (for social change)

These three focus areas underpin our planning for 2010-2011. Highlighting education for social change is an explicit acknowledgement that education can either reproduce or contribute to the transformation of society (it can be domesticating or liberating, as Brazilian educator Paulo Freire would frame it) and we align ourselves to supporting education that will achieve the latter.

¹⁰Quotes are taken from the full report of the review, not the synthesis presented in this document. For a copy of the full report contact Egigayehu.Summers@actionaid.org Egigayehu.Summers@actionaid.org

1.3 The conclusion: *“While the reality of education systems and discrimination differs widely across the areas where ActionAid works, all programmes should be designed within the 4A (accessibility, adaptability, availability and appropriateness) framework; based on good local knowledge and understanding and relevant to context.”*

DISAGREE – BUT ALSO AGREE: we do not believe that the 4A framework developed by Katarina Tomasevski is one that talks very easily to people working at the local level. We have promoted it over the past two years – for example, through the *Education rights: A guide for practitioners and activists* – but have found that people grapple to translate it into practice. It is not easy to remember or use.

Nevertheless, we strongly agree with the intention behind this – which is to provide a strong uniting rights-rooted focus to all our education work locally. For this reason we are developing, with national colleagues, the idea of “rights-respecting schools”. We will highlight a charter of 10 basic rights that all schools should respect, which will provide a uniting framework to all our programme work with schools. The focus on schools and children sounds obvious – but has been missing from most of the way in which we have framed our work recently – and it has provided a powerful uniting focus for countries like India, which aim to “make government schools work effectively”. The essence of the 4As would be captured in the simple charter of 10 key rights.

1.4 From the conclusion: *“Sharpen and coordinate existing participatory methodologies and enhance investment in Reflect: Underlying all participatory processes are a set of principles which involve analysing power and strengthening people’s analytical and communication skills and capacity for action. Reflect is key in this regard in that it links these skills to literacy learning within an intensive and extensive programme. More focused work with Reflect should not only contribute to enhance sustainability and local-national linkages but also contribute to more evidence-based involvement in international adult education fora.”*

AGREE: after five years of separation, we want to bring *Reflect* more fully back into our education work – but with a powerful new focus on women’s rights. The separation of *Reflect* from the education theme back in 2005 was a mistake and led to a loss of continuity. This is why revitalising *Reflect* as a tool both for social change and women’s education in ActionAid is one of our three priorities moving forward. Ideally, we would like to recruit a new dedicated staff member to lead the *Reflect* work – if additional core funding becomes available – and we will certainly be fundraising for this as a priority.

2. Recommendations on education strategy

2.1 The education strategy should be revised to be more focused, more target-driven and a more effective framework for developing and monitoring strategic education programmes. This strategy should be a key reference point for country programmes when developing their wider country strategies to ensure the two are consistent and linked. The new strategy should clarify the role of IET in relation to country programmes and the role of lead advisors in each country. It should include an operational plan with fundraising and capacity building programmes.

AGREE: we agree that we need to revise our IES to produce a more focused strategy with clearer targets and a framework for evaluation. We aim to develop this over the coming six months in consultation with country programmes – and already feel that we have the core elements of this. The revised strategy will talk in more detail about the roles of IET and lead education colleagues. Certainly, any new strategy should have an associated operational plan with fundraising and capacity building programmes. We will try to get some core funding into the three strategic strands of our work by producing generic proposals for each of them and reaching out to new potential funders. The capacity-building plan will focus on how we can strengthen the core cadre of lead education colleagues at national level – with an emphasis on how to link local programmes to national policy work (especially through research and evidence).

3. Recommendations on roles and relationships

3.1 People working on education have relevant skills and experience for their areas of work, but these are in pockets. Roles need to complement each other, to combine different skills and build good communication and accountability within the theme.

Recommendations include:

- IET should be staffed appropriately – *“to support this agenda it is recommended that the team should increase to at least eight full-time staff by 2015”* – with more core funding to continue to provide leadership on education and coordinate a strong and well linked cadre of staff working at different levels.
- *country programmes engaging on education should have at least one full-time member of staff devoted to education at national level, who would spend 50% of time focusing on local education issues and supporting education programming ; the role should be based on a common profile, with IET providing induction support and professional development. ActionAid should invest in strong systems to ensure that IET can respond to country programme priorities.*

MOSTLY AGREE: we recognise that there is a case for an expanded staff within IET but in the present financial

situation, this cannot be addressed immediately (in 2010-2011). It is something that the international directors will consider in the longer term in relation to the wider evidence coming out of *Taking Stock* and in the light of the shape of the new agency-wide strategy.

If the other recommendations on roles and relationships are implemented, we may be able to cope without a significant increase in the core IET (with some re-orientation and re-prioritising of work within the existing team). Specifically, it would be a big step forward if all country programmes working on education had a full-time member of staff dedicated to the theme – with a more recognised role in supporting local programmes as well as linking internationally. If IET is given a more active role in the induction and professional development of this cadre, we could expand our overall capacity, bringing people up into sub-regional roles or enabling them to lead on different sub-thematic priorities. We are already developing a template for an induction plan and would be keen to work with international human resources on a generic role profile. In general, the education constituency within ActionAid has been a positive example of a “learning community”, but we feel much more could be done if we clarify and strengthen roles going forward.

We **DISAGREE** with the suggestion that IET fails to respond to country priorities at present – as all of our priority work has evolved out of extended consultation and we have managed until now to respond to every request for support from country colleagues when asked. However, we recognise that we lack a system that allows us to systematically capture the full diversity of country programme priorities at present. Of course, it is unrealistic for a team of 4.8 to respond to all the different priorities of 43 countries. We will, however, seek to improve basic communication so that all country priorities are clearly captured and we will seek to respond to them better, prioritising programme support and better organising peer support, country exchanges and links to other resources.

4. Recommendations on approaches

4.1 The review found diverse interpretations of what a rights-based approach means in practice; specifically in relation to the role of service delivery. It recommended that:

- ActionAid should facilitate a collective reflection process to agree how service delivery works within a right-based approach to education, specifically in relation to government schools and systems. Implementing a rights-based approach should be part of any participatory review and planning process.
- IET should provide guidance on how to integrate gender and power analysis into the planning, implementation and monitoring of education work.
- IET should strengthen and invest in *Reflect*.

AGREE: we have taken a deliberately strong position over the past five years that has tended to pose a rights-based approach as being largely against service delivery in education (see, for example our resource pack *Education rights: A guide for practitioners and activists*). We believe this was a necessary stand at the time but that now we urgently need to provide more practical guidance to countries about how to use service delivery within a rights-based approach to education – including how to build a school in a rights-based way (though we must avoid opening the floodgates to simple infrastructure projects wrapped up in rights-based rhetoric). We plan to produce practical guidelines on this during the first half of 2010, which will help to put an end to the present confusion whereby some countries espouse a rights-based approach, but in practice do very traditional service delivery work. We need the guidelines to get inside the “how” question: it is not so much what you do but how you do it – for example, you can build a school as a response to immediate needs, or you can use the process of building a school to mobilise people around education rights. We then need to back up these guidelines with a strong capacity development plan for education colleagues across the organisation (as touched on in response 3 above), focused on helping national colleagues link more systematically to local programmes.

We also **AGREE** with the need to promote *Reflect* and will bring it back into the education sector with a strong focus on women’s rights and power analysis. Most of the other participatory methods used within ActionAid (such as Stepping Stones, STAR, PVA) draw on a similar basket of tools, but *Reflect* offers a more sustained process which can connect with the work of all other themes while also building the capacity for literacy, communication and organisation of the poorest or most excluded groups. The link to social mobilisation and community-based organisations, particularly around women’s rights, will be prioritised.

4.2 Different approaches to campaigning (as an extensive process) should be considered. “IET should develop alternative solutions: While ActionAid has rightly criticised the direct delivery of small-scale alternative models of schooling it should consider how to engage with the government systems more broadly and constructively through offering alternative solutions. This involves reconsidering campaigning and advocacy styles and investing in well evidenced research to produce alternative policies.”

PARTLY AGREE: We are less clear about what is suggested by the review about different approaches to campaigning, but believe that the transition of our financing work from international to national level with a focus on capacity building and long-term partnerships – for example, with teachers’ unions – fits this mould. We are not aware of operating any short-term campaigns or supporting such approaches either in the past or present. However, we do agree with the need to support more research (see recommendations on monitoring, reporting and sharing learning in part 6 of this section) and to focus on alternative solutions.

The review suggests that we need to explore whether the state should not only guarantee and finance basic education but also always deliver (which is our present default view). We will promote a wider debate on this within ActionAid, linked to reflections on national development strategies and the role of the state. We will engage on this from a principled position that opposes: fee-charging (i.e. low-cost private schooling); two-tiered systems; or Northern-imposed models (such as vouchers) that increase inequalities. Yet we recognise the need to explore new ways of expanding financing and delivering on quality public education for all.

We actively promote the idea that ActionAid and education coalitions should cost out the policy reforms that they advocate and seek low-cost solutions – for example, as is currently being done with locally procured free school meals in Bangladesh. However, we will continue to challenge some of the “low-cost” cheap-labour solutions – such as recruitment of non-professional teachers – that have become popular in recent years and that threaten basic quality (however, we remain open to increasing the role of local people and/or parents as teaching assistants).

5. Recommendations on partnerships and coalitions

5.1 The education theme is highly regarded for its work in coalitions and strengthening the links between civil society and teachers unions at all levels. Yet these relationships are complicated, especially when one partner has more power and resources. Education leads voiced challenges, which included skewed power relations, partners’ capacity gaps and dealing with multiple accountability lines. The review recommended that:

- ActionAid needs to acknowledge the tension between the role of partner and support provider and reflect on how to make partnerships more equal; this includes specific reflection on the transformation of power, and how to adapt the Paris 21 declaration principles.
- IET should lead in defining the types of partnership and strategic alliances to strengthen education work, including actors beyond education, and other INGOs.

DISAGREE: We agree that there are important power issues to be addressed when we are working in coalition but we feel that we have done more work on this than was acknowledged in the review – for example, through CEF and the publication of resources such as Driving the bus, which raised serious challenges for INGOs, including ActionAid, and way in which we work in coalitions. We feel that the review also fails to look in sufficient detail at the ground-breaking work we have done in forging an alliance with Education International and teachers’ unions and with many regional institutions. This is challenging to ActionAid

as it is forging partnerships with organisations which often have substantial power (though different power than our own). We feel that we have worked more closely with other INGOs in education than in any other sector – most notably through CEF with Oxfam and Save the Children, but also through links with many other INGOs on issues such as violence against girls. Yes, we agree that ActionAid should always reflect on power issues in its partnerships – but some of the comments in the review about partnerships relate more to ActionAid approaches in general (especially to development area-level partners) than to anything specific about education.

6. Recommendations for monitoring, reporting and sharing learning

6.1 The review found that voices of national and local education staff and partners need to be stronger in education planning and campaigning. Systematic monitoring, reporting and sharing of learning are central to this. It recommended that:

- IET should develop systems to ensure that information about education work is available centrally, which will involve building staff capacity to identify and document relevant issues. Knowledge relevant to ActionAid’s wider aims should also be systematically identified and shared.
- IET should develop a monitoring framework with common indicators for tracking aspects of a rights-based approach to education.
- The education theme should extend its current links with research institutions to develop further its research base at national and international levels.
- A monitoring and evaluation framework specific to the education thematic group should be developed; it should draw on the ALPS approach and comprise an annual census document which collects basic information on education

PARTLY AGREE: the lack of systems for collating information centrally is not something specific to education, but rather an issue across ActionAid.

However, we strongly agree that there is a need to promote a core set of indicators for education programmes and that all programmes should be encouraged to collect baseline data to help them track changes over time. Strengthening these practices across ActionAid is essential if we are to link programme, policy and campaigning work. For each of the three new focus areas we will identify simple baseline data that can be collected and indicators that it would be useful to track. We will urge all country programmes and all local partners working on education to draw from this basket of common indicators so that we are in a position to collate data more systematically and link programme and policy work. This

will be particularly important for work with “rights-respecting schools”. A new evaluation framework for *Reflect* has recently been developed and the education finance toolkit provides a useful foundation for monitoring and evaluating financing work. We agree that an annual census would be useful – though we are concerned that this may not be achievable with present staffing levels.

In the past two years, we have had significant experience in building partnerships with research institutions at international and national levels (especially in multi-country projects) and we believe that some of the benefits of this way of working with researchers need to be brought to all sponsorship-funded programmes – so that we can use all field programmes as the basis for building an evidence base. This can be done at relatively low cost with national or sub-regional research partners who see the benefits of practical connections to field work – especially where links are made to masters courses in national universities.

7. Recommendations on sustainable and flexible funding

7.1 In many countries there is little connection between funding planning and education programme planning; which is further complicated by the fact that most education lead staff sit within policy teams, separate from education programmes. As such, the review recommends that:

- education leads should be involved in the national budget process for local education programmes
- education staff should develop funding plans as part of their annual plan, including areas seeking external funding; and international funding should build from these national plans.

PARTLY AGREE: ideally national education leads would have much more say about education budgets in their country, but present structures usually make this impossible. Those that are part of a policy department lack direct links to programmes, while head office staff based in the capital also lack regular exposure to field realities. Comments under recommendations on roles and relationships in part 3 of this section partly address this problem. We must also bear in mind that, although we need to deepen their links to field programmes, their roles should never be more than advisory to local partners in developing plans and budgets (as there are power issues which need to be respected).

7.2 Programmes receiving funds from child sponsorship should review and report how this contributes to children accessing their right to education. “It is recommended that a more in-depth review of child sponsorship be undertaken and that attention be paid to better understanding the link between the education sponsorship and programming. Such a review should underscore the importance of and offer suggestions about how

any community work funded through child sponsorship works explicitly on the right to education. This will not only make funding more coherent but will also provide a stronger narrative for sponsorship communications.”

We **STRONGLY AGREE** that all sponsorship-funded programmes ought to report on what they have done to enhance children’s right to education, even if sometimes this is indirectly – for example, by supporting programmes that increase women’s income and have a knock-on effect on girls’ education. We do not think it is necessary or advisable to return to the days when all ActionAid sponsorship-funded programmes had to show significant direct benefits in education within a fixed period. However, it seems right that partners should have to provide a clear narrative that links what they are doing to an impact on children and education (especially where some children locally are out of school). We know that this is part of the expectations of sponsors and we need to respect this if we are to be coherent and principled in the way we manage sponsorship funding. We believe that this is something on which international directors will need to take a position and where new guidelines may be needed.

In the meantime, we are committed as IET to working on the re-invigoration of child sponsorship, looking at how we can maximise the potential connections – especially where the administration of child sponsorship is done with the help of schools or where there is an educational dimension to the work with sponsored (and non-sponsored) children. The first step is indeed to have a more systematic review as we will share the detailed findings of our present review with the sponsorship team and encourage more active communication of all education colleagues with sponsorship colleagues.

8. Reactions to a selection of other critical comments and insights

8.1 Promote active engagement in confronting the increasing dependency of many African countries on international aid.

AGREE: the new financing toolkit launched in September 2009 starts to address domestic taxation and we agree that aid dependency is something that should be challenged. In this spirit, we are keen to work with others on national development strategies (see also recommendations on alternative delivery systems in part 4 of this section).

8.2 IET should be more programme-led, offer more extensive programme support and have more in-depth programme knowledge, including technical understanding of programme implementation at local level.

AGREE: we have been more policy-focused than programme-focused in recent years – but this was counterbalancing a long history of programme-focussed work. We needed to show that there was an important education policy arena, where we could make a huge contribution. The effect of this, however, was that the international team paid less attention to grassroots work and participatory engagement with schools and communities. The breadth of the ambitious rights agenda in the IES may have facilitated this detachment: the lack of clarity regarding the priority focus for local-level programme work meant it was not easy to provide coordinated support or consolidate learning. The education rights publication provided an excellent foundation for rights-based work locally but its length and complexity meant that this became a broad basket for people to pick from rather than a uniting thread.

In future, we will continue to work on policy issues, especially through our partnerships with GCE and EI but we AGREE to focus more on programmes and work internally – as this should provide the base for our policy engagement. The three focus areas of our proposed revised strategy have a strong programme thread – in contrast to the policy-heavy original strategy. IET will push a change in emphasis across all education staff in ActionAid – re-prioritising and celebrating innovative and well-documented rights-based programme work. As part of this we will review IET role profiles and work plans with a view to ensuring that more time and attention is given to support programme design and evaluation. This will include supporting comprehensive programme and policy reviews of education work in countries with large education spending; we hope this re-focusing on programme work will be echoed across the organisation by senior managers.

However, we **DO NOT AGREE** that providing programme support at local level involves a different set of technical skills (especially as our intention is to break down the programme-policy divide). Our existing team has the experience to do this. What is needed is more of us if we are to provide the recommended level of support to local programmes. We also need to have systems that will stimulate country programmes to request support. As we move towards a greater focus on programme support, we need to ensure that the education theme strengthens its links with regional directors as well as its present links to the policy director.

8.3 More attention should be paid to the regional level. This includes participation in ActionAid regional events in addition to a more focused engagement with external regional processes.

AGREE: we have engaged in some regional processes in Africa, both from country programme level and through partnerships with ANCEFA, CLADE and ASPBAE – but we could do more as an education team at regional level. We have tended not to prioritise internal meetings – on the understanding that in each region we have one CD

responsible for championing education. We need to make more of this role – or ensure there is an IET presence at key regional meetings in future. We also hope to bring up a cadre of national education colleagues who will take on sub-regional and regional roles. The recent funding we secured for GCE to support civil society education funds has provided a massive boost to the regional coalitions ANCEFA, ASPBAE and CLADE – as well as to their membership; ActionAid has established an active role in each of the three regional funding committees that are channelling an initial fund of US\$6.5 million (with another US\$10 million likely to be agreed in November 2009).

8.4 IET should divide its work among its current (and future) staff in such a way that each member has a specific region/sub-region as their remit. Second, it is recommended that IET's role definition explicitly indicate that staff should spend a minimum of 20-25% providing operational support to country programmes. Third, it is recommended that consideration be given to mutual interactions between IET and country-based staff – this could include education leads being seconded (for six months to a year) as part of IET.

PARTLY AGREE: we already divide regions and other themes between the core IET staff but, with a small team, there is a limit to our capacity to be everywhere that we would like to be. It is already an explicit expectation that we spend 30% of our time supporting country programmes (as agreed in the National International Handbook), but we recognise that we fall short on this in practice. In future, we will expect this 30% to be shown clearly in our individual work plans – and to reflect on how we are achieving this in our appraisals. We believe that secondments into IET could work very well, as could increasing the responsibility of more national education leads, giving them sub-regional or sub-theme responsibilities. Operational support to country programmes does not need to come only from IET; if we can build a stronger education cadre across the organisation, there would be more peer support, accompaniment, exchange visits, etc.

8.5 Concerns were raised about ActionAid's capacity to manage large, particularly multi-country projects. It was noted that while ActionAid was good at managing single-country and small-scale projects, recent experiences on the TEGINT, VAGS and ILOPS projects had been problematic.

AGREE: there are some serious problems with multi-country projects, where accountability structures are not strong enough in each country and project managers struggle to have their voices heard. We are working with project managers and the accountability teams on the three specified projects to seek to address this and find new solutions. We believe some changes may be needed in the present structure of international accountability teams, with more focus on national accountability teams and stronger connections to in-country line management and appraisal systems.

8.6 IET should participate in organisational debates, contributing from an education perspective, to strengthen ActionAid's work more generally.

AGREE: we have been too inward looking within education and too outward looking (outside the organisation), and as such have failed to engage sufficiently internally. We will seek to change this, finding strategic occasions to engage more fully – for example: in the re-invigoration of sponsorship; in supporting policy-wide work on national development strategies; in sharing learning around participatory approaches and power analysis; and in contributing to learning around multi-country projects and the role of the international partnership division.

9. Gaps in the review

There are some areas where we felt the review did not do as much as we or others wanted. These are as follows:

9.1 The review did not go into much detail about what we are spending where and how much impact different investments are having in relation to each other – in other words, it does not help us make an immediate judgment that investing in X is more cost-effective than investing in Y. This arises in part from the absence of good finance information being available for the reviewers to draw on. The terms of reference did not prioritise this, either – and if they had the review would have been framed very differently (again, it would be more suitable for a summative than formative review). However, there are some useful observations made throughout the report about the level of our influence and impact – for example, that we punch above our weight.

9.2 The review does not tell us much about what we are doing in Northern countries, which indicates a clear gap. We have not developed a specific tool for funding affiliates to explore their work in development education, with schools and youth or supporting national coalitions to track their government's bilateral aid programmes for education. Work is growing in this area – notably in UK, Ireland, Italy and Greece – and we recommend that this be reviewed in future.

9.3 The review does not give us many insights into how the internationalisation process and the development of national boards, etc, may affect our education work. Again this indicates another gap: we assume that in many cases, as national boards develop, education work is, if anything, likely to become a higher priority – but this assumption needs to be tested and we need to explore effective ways of bringing national boards into the processes of developing and owning the revised IES.

9.4 The review team did not evaluate directly against the objectives of the IES to determine the extent to which we have achieved what we set out to do. In part this was because the review was more formative than summative – helping us to reflect on progress rather than seeking to judge our achievements. It certainly achieved these formative objectives and we have gained insights that help us make tentative summative judgments about how we have performed. We hope that the Taking Stock review will provide an opportunity for us to make a more systematic assessment against our objectives. In the coming weeks IET will also carry out its own assessment, drawing on evidence and learning from this review. It is, however, important to recognise the difficulties in this, both because it is hard to judge the relative attribution of our own interventions compared to others – and it because it is hard to do an assessment without having taken a good baseline. This has informed our desire to be much more systematic in the process of baseline data collection and agreeing of indicators in all future education work. We need to improve the rigour with which ActionAid evaluates its work and the starting point must be stronger baselines.

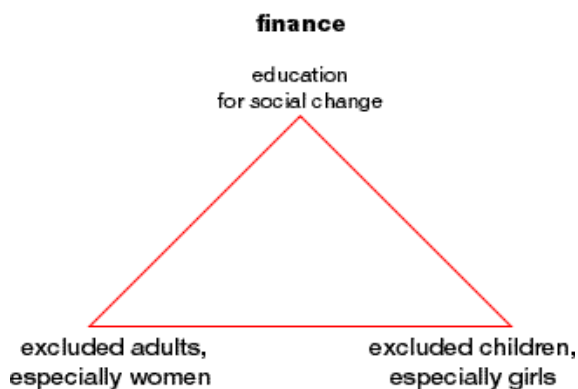
10. Overall future directions for education work in the light of this review

Below are some initial ideas for how IET plans can be re-framed over the coming two years in the light of this review, still working in line with the approved IES, but with a sharper focus and more effective operationalisation. The key is to provide a simple and practical framework that will help unite work at local, national and international levels – linking programme engagement to policy and campaigning. This re-framing will provide a foundation to help ActionAid develop a new strategy for its work on education after finalising its new agency-wide strategy.

We propose that all our work be framed under a uniting goal of seeking to achieve *education for social change* (this includes transforming gender relations). There will be three core focus areas of work (which between them fuse the previous six strategic goals):

- promoting quality schools which respect child rights (and contribute to social change)
- rebuilding *Reflect* for women's literacy and empowerment (for social change)
- securing financing to achieve quality education (for social change)

These can be simply represented (see diagram over the page):



Each of these focus area will involve both programme and policy work with excluded groups – at local, national and international levels. On the policy side these will seek to be harmonised or connected in 2010/2011 with policy-wide ActionAid priorities on national development strategies, agriculture and climate change. However, equally important are the programme support dimensions – offering clearer guidance on the role of service delivery within a rights-based approach.

One of the key review recommendations was that we should build local work around Tomasevski 's 4A framework. In discussions we found that this framework remains confusing to people at grassroots level and that it would be more powerful to build a concept around "rights-respecting schools", based on a charter of 10 core rights which all schools should respect. All these rights should arise clearly from international treaties and conventions, but are likely to include the right to:

- free and compulsory education
- adequate infrastructure
- quality trained teachers
- non-discrimination
- a safe and non-violent environment
- relevant education
- learn about your rights
- participate
- transparent and accountable schools
- quality learning.

Our concern will be, as it always has been, to look at each of these rights from the perspective of the most excluded and marginalised children. Likewise, our work with *Reflect* will focus on the most marginalised adults, and women in particular. Even our work on education financing will be framed with a strong concern for equity and redistribution of resources to those who most need them. The three elements of this new framework provide us with a more explicit and tangible focus to our rights-based work – and help ensure that everything we do is rooted in programme work.

The three strands also provide us with a strong foundation for responding to a changing external environment. Education is seen in some circles (not least in the Davos World Economic Forum) as the next big frontier for privatisation. Despite a lack of evidence base, the World

Bank is pushing public-private partnerships in the sector. Our new focus on rights-respecting schools and collecting rigorous evidence should help us resist these trends and reassert the role of the state in education.

The new framework is as valid in urban as in rural areas, which will be important in the context of the violation of education rights in many marginal (especially unrecognised or illegal) urban settlements. Schools are also becoming important frontline actors in tracking and responding to climate change. Building on our work on disaster risk reduction in schools, we can embed responsiveness to climate change as a fundamental right in schools (tied, for example, to the right for relevant education). Women's literacy and empowerment programmes can also be seen as a crucial part of a frontline response to climate change in the most vulnerable communities. This new framing of our education strategy should help ActionAid respond effectively to these and other changes in the external environment.

We need to do more work in the coming months to spell out the roles and responsibilities of both IET and national education staff in delivering on this new framework. However, together with some country-level education leads, we have made an initial attempt to look at the programme and policy work that may be involved in these three strands at local, national and international level over the next couple of years and provide a summary here:

We believe that this will offer countries a much simpler and more manageable way to engage with agency-wide priorities. We are also committed to increasing IET support to country programmes to bolster these priorities – through training, exchange visits, reactive support as requested, induction visits, etc. Each country, development area or partner may still choose to prioritise just one or two of the three focus areas – and within these, they could focus more closely on certain parts – for example, on one or two of the 10 rights embedded in the charter on rights-respecting schools. The difference is that they would be doing this within a more strongly recognised common framework, which links programme and policy work.

We are also very committed to providing a strong framework for baseline data collection and to support tracking of core indicators for each of the three areas of work. We will also put in place systems to collate and use this data effectively to underpin policy and campaigning work.

We strongly support the need for more IET involvement in the induction and development of national staff – and are working on a framework for such a plan.

At international level, IET is keen to support countries in whichever of the priorities they pick, but at the same we recognise that with only 4.8 staff at the international level, the IET may not be able to take on everything. In the longer term, if ActionAid's next strategy continues to prioritise education and if more resources become available, then it would make sense to expand the team so that they can deliver fully on the recommendations from this review.

	LOCAL	NATIONAL	INTERNATIONAL
Promoting quality schools which respect child rights (and contribute to social change)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Promoting work around a core charter on rights-respecting schools with 10 relevant rights ■ Mapping rights violations against these locally, from the perspective of the most excluded groups ■ Promoting baselines and tracking against some or all of these violations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Promoting work with parliament, courts and judicial and human rights organisations ■ Mobilising excluded children, parents and teachers to participate in discussions around quality and key aspects of the charter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Producing a simple charter on rights-respecting schools ■ Linking to reinvigoration of child sponsorship / children's participation ■ Producing a brief baseline of indicators to monitor and track initiatives and potential impact ■ Producing simple guidelines on service delivery within a rights-based approach ■ Linking to the right to education project's human rights education indicators initiative
Rebuilding <i>Reflect</i> for women's literacy and empowerment (for social change)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Refocusing <i>Reflect</i> in ActionAid with a very strong women's rights focus at its centre ■ Improving quality of training of facilitators and trainers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Promoting use of new monitoring and evaluation framework in six pilots in six countries ■ Identifying key quality trainers (in and out of ActionAid) and building their capacity ■ Popularising the benchmarks ■ Strengthening national <i>Reflect</i> and literacy networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Supporting a training of trainers for ActionAid to rebuild internal capacity ■ Securing new external funding for monitoring and evaluation, training, networking and advocacy ■ Reviewing and updating the literacy benchmarks
Securing financing to achieve quality education (for social change)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Strengthening local budget tracking linked to tracking school performances (drawing on CEF and other resources), especially by excluded groups ■ Costing of "rights-respecting schools" or of delivering on any one of the rights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Supporting and building national campaigns (using the new financing toolkit) ■ Linking them to other sectors and national development strategies ■ Deepening partnerships with teachers' unions and education coalitions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Maintaining pressure on the IMF and G20 ■ Updating Education on the Brink with GCE ■ Contributing to GCE's GWA) and the 1GOAL campaign

We are confident that this review has been very worthwhile and that it will help us adapt ActionAid's work on education rights to be ever-more effective in the years that come. It is difficult to be precise about how we will be able to operationalise changes until we have some greater clarity from international directors about the budget that will be available for 2010-2011.

We are also keen to receive feedback from international directors, country directors, theme heads and others on the proposed revisions to our strategy as outlined above: this will inform us while operationalising the way forward over the coming months. We will therefore publish an accessible version of this report and our responses later in 2010 – and will make the full original evaluation available on the website (www.actionaid.org).



Section
Three

Profiles and explorations of ActionAid's education work

This section includes some of the more substantive and qualitative material coming out of the review process that shows the work, impact and influence of ActionAid's education teams in more depth and in context. It includes examples of work and impact from interviews and surveys, and three critical stories of change, commissioned by the review team to illustrate different dimensions of ActionAid's work in education. External consultants visited projects, facilitated reflections among key actors and wrote the stories to highlight the impact, complexity and challenges of the work. The stories selected were:

- advocacy on the role of the IMF in education financing in Sierra Leone, to explore how an international research programme was interpreted and implemented at national level
- the national education coalition in Brazil, to look at how a national coalition can be well rooted and successful
- *Reflect* work with Dalit groups in Nepal, to understand how identity-based movements can emerge and be sustained.



Part one Profiles of representative and quality work

The review questionnaire asked education leads to identify programmes of work that best reflect their country programme's strengths. This enabled the review team to get both a feel for education work in practice and an idea of country programmes' different areas of priority and importance.

Latin America

Brazil highlighted the adult literacy programme. The Landless Workers' Movement (MST) in Maranhão has established a partnership with the state government to teach young people and adults in camps and settlements to read and write. The work is based on a methodology successfully adopted in Cuba, and greatly influenced by Paulo Freire's work. This initiative has succeeded in teaching people in agrarian reform camp areas how to read and write in an average of six months.

The *Guatemala* programme mentioned their lobbying and advocacy work for free education. As a member of the Education for All (EFA) collective, ActionAid Guatemala has facilitated and strengthened discussion of public and free education in national fora, supporting the efforts of the Collective for Education in Guatemala, an organisation that was previously isolated in its efforts. As a result, the current government is considering the education issues of poor and excluded communities, and citizens' level of awareness of education rights and government responsibilities has been raised.

Asia

Bangladesh wrote about their work on governance. The *people's plan of action* is a process through which communities and institutions organise themselves to get involved in local government planning and implementation processes. *People's plan of action* creates the scope to ensure responsive and democratic public processes and systems at local, national and international levels. This is a community-led and NGO-facilitated empowerment process that encompasses three stages: mainstreaming good practices; community auditing of education and other services; and participatory planning and budgeting exercises with local government.

Cambodia mentioned its community organising work, a social process to translate a rights-based approach into local people's own language and practice. Most of the areas where ActionAid Cambodia works are remote and excluded: they are still affected by the civil war that ended in 1998 and lack access to social services, including education. People are unaware that the state is obliged to provide education services. The community organising process has

strengthened people's knowledge at local level, to understand the government's role and responsibilities and demand accountability, teachers and schools from the government. Success has led to the provision of space for a hundred children to go to school. Although the number of children benefiting is small, it makes a huge contribution to cultivating hope and encouraging other communities in the process of demanding state accountability and responsiveness.

School management is a main issue for ActionAid *China*. At community level, a good school development plan requires full participation from teachers, students and parents. This is an important factor in ensuring the success of ActionAid China's work to improve school management at the community level. From 2008, the school development plan became a key focus to improve the quality of education projects at village level, including evaluation and budget analysis components. ActionAid China uses participatory methods and implements school development plans with students, teachers and parents together.

India highlighted their work to mobilise communities for education rights, as fundamental to ensuring education for poor and excluded people. The interface between the organised mobilisation of excluded communities and local self-governance contributes to making quality education real and dealing with discrimination in school. Community participation in various school processes is integral to community mobilisation – tracking attendance and out of schoolchildren. The quality and effectiveness of community mobilisation is reflected in processes beyond the local, through organised campaigns or collective protests at district and state levels demanding the right to education.

Reflect was the main story in *Nepal*, constituting the core of ActionAid Nepal's interventions. *Reflect* has been an effective tool for political conscientisation, organising and mobilising the capacity of marginalised communities, and has positively impacted on governance reform at local levels. *Reflect* has sensitised communities to education and encouraged them to send school-age children to school. In many cases, discussion about government provision of scholarships for girls and Dalit children has led to these communities claiming their rights and increasing access to scholarship entitlements. *Reflect* participants have stood for and won school management council elections, and influenced these bodies' decisions in favour of rights-deprived groups – for example, to end user fees at school. The enrolment of children from marginalised communities has increased as a result.

In *Vietnam*, an adult literacy and community development programme using the *Reflect* approach was piloted by ActionAid in 2000. So far, the programme has convincingly proved its effectiveness in the field of adult literacy, reaching more than 12,000 people – mostly ethnic minority women – in 12 provinces. Some 97 village community development clubs have officially been established; six women have become members of the commune people's council and many other participants have become active members or leaders of local mass organisations such as women's

unions, youth unions, etc. The approach has been adapted by 11 donors and INGOs, and the Ministry of Education and Training has authorised a training pack on *Reflect* for adult literacy authorised by the Department of

Pakistan highlighted their work on district education budgets. There has been a global call to increase the national education budget to a minimum 6% of GDP. As part of their national budget campaign, ActionAid Pakistan collaborated with the Institute of Social and Policy Studies to launch a project to address budgetary processes, underinvestment, and the absence of policy levers for: the required resource allocation; missing budget lines; delays in fiscal transfers; poor spending capacity; and transparency issues at district level. The strategic objective of the research was to advocate with the government on district-level educational spending, to find out how much deficit persists at school level, and to identify gaps in the flow of the budget. At a second stage, we will build the capacity of local partners to track the budget in their respective districts

In *Thailand*, education rights work has been built on research and network building. ActionAid Thailand supported a 2007 study to monitor the right to education for disadvantaged children, which highlighted the importance of including civil society in the planning and implementation process. Lessons learned from the study led 14 organisations to come together to form the Thai Education Watch Network, with the mission to promote basic education and a focus on community participation. Network activities include writing a report on the right to education, skill sharing between organisations, human rights training and media campaigning. ActionAid Thailand had an important role as an initiator and facilitator, and in ensuring the participatory nature of the study and network-building process.

Africa

Ethiopia wrote about their provision of non-formal education. ActionAid Ethiopia has been working in areas where education problems are too enormous and access to basic education for children very limited. Over the years, many ActionAid Ethiopia programmes turned to establishing Access centres in the poorest and most remote communities. These centres have received growing recognition and support from local government bodies, who are taking increased responsibility for sustaining Access programmes. Local governments are also implementing programmes in other contexts by allocating resources and integrating Access in their education plans; in various regions they are now involved in planning, implementing and monitoring Access, which has become an alternative basic education programme. Government recognition of the Access programmes was achieved because of ActionAid Ethiopia's continuous engagement in advocacy and lobbying work. Most areas have established links between the Access centres and the formal education system: these have been encouraging and have helped poor children make the transition from Access centres to formal schools more easily.

In *Ghana*, ActionAid played a pivotal role in establishing a strong secretariat for Ghana's Education Network. In 2000 when the Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition (GNECC) was established, ActionAid provided both technical and financial support to get the network registered and buttressed at both regional and district levels. In 2003, with financial support from CEF, and under the management of ActionAid Ghana and OXFAM, GNECC recruited staff to run the secretariat and gained enough recognition to serve on various Ministry of Education committees. GNECC established lower-level district *Education for All* teams that engaged in district-level advocacy to ensure that adequate resources were being allocated from the District Assembly Common Fund to support primary education. They undertook research on low enrolment as a result of poverty and shared their findings with the Ministry of Education. Advocacy activities contributed to the introduction of the capitation grant that provides fee-free education, while various campaign activities put the plight of rural schoolchildren in the public domain: gaps in the quality of education – for example, poor infrastructure, the inadequate supply of teachers and teaching materials – were discussed in the media. Political parties were made to defend their manifestos in various fora with regards to how they would ensure quality education for the ordinary Ghanaian child. Our collaborative efforts over the past eight years have succeeded in ensuring that quality education remains high on the government's agenda.

In *Liberia*, ActionAid has focused on strengthening the capacity of community structures and groups to understand our approach to education rights and how to engage duty bearers and other stakeholders in demanding their rights. Community members have also received training on how to get actively involved in education governance and management and have been supporting their children – particularly their girls – to enrol in and stay in school. At the national level, ActionAid Liberia has been very active in organising and supporting the formation of education coalitions and alliances, helping them understand the rights-based approach to education and how to campaign with the state for achieving the Millennium Development Goals and other international instruments that the government has signed.

Malawi highlighted its work on violence against girls in schools (VAGS). ActionAid Malawi conducted research to raise awareness on the issue of VAGS, which led to other organisations taking up the issue, and also mobilised CSOs to work on VAGS. They developed a readmission policy to get teen mothers back to school and have been very active, both in raising awareness of the policy and monitoring its implementation. ActionAid has also been instrumental in the formation of mothers' groups training them to support and counsel girls and their parents on the importance of sending girls to school, ensuring the retention of girls in schools and handling cases of violence against girls. ActionAid Malawi also supported the improvement of the school environment through the provision of adequate toilets for girls and desks in the classrooms: school management committees have used these examples to successfully advocate for a better

environment in other schools. This work is now being complemented by a UNICEF-funded project called the *child-friendly schools project*.

In *Mozambique*, it is impossible to talk about the education programmes and not mention *Reflect* circles activities, which is one of ActionAid Mozambique's strengths. In 2008, ActionAid Mozambique's *Reflect* work was focused on training and building the capacity of facilitators on rights and gender equality. This is a good example of ActionAid Mozambique's successful relationship with the government, particularly with the Ministry of Education at all levels as the government still pays subsidies for facilitators. The results of this strong linkage are also good: more than 40% of the women can write their names and count.

In *Sierra Leone*, ActionAid gained visibility largely due to education financing work and through support to non-formal education. ActionAid Sierra Leone has trained teachers to improve the quality of their delivery and develop professional teaching services. Poor communities with very limited knowledge of their rights have been empowered to be vibrant and take the lead in agitating for facilities such as schools, health centres, water and toilet facilities. The stride to ensure that these schools are being recognised by government and that teachers are put on the government payroll is a strength we want to build on to ensure that all schools meet the required standard and that quality is ensured at all times.

Teacher training is an activity that ActionAid *Somaliland* has been engaged in for a long time. ActionAid Somaliland trains teachers in primary schools (both public and non-formal) to enhance their teaching capacity. Training is given to trainers working in regional education offices so that they train teachers. Trainings cover: lesson planning and scheme of work; use of local materials as teaching aids; participatory child-friendly techniques, etc. ActionAid Somaliland has built the teaching capacity of more than 200 teachers in the past three years.

ActionAid *Tanzania* has been working to address the barriers to girls' education. The team realised that most girls were dropping out of secondary schools and less girls made the transition from primary to secondary level. Discussion with communities revealed that the key cause was pregnancy, which accounted for 6% of all truancy. It was also noted that students have to travel long distances to and from school, making girls more exposed to sexual harassment. ActionAid started a model project in some of our operational areas where this seems to be a major challenge. With the objective of modelling girls' access to education and as a strategy to influence the government, ActionAid Tanzania has provided seven hostels in six development areas. These hostels accommodate 355 girls from poor and vulnerable areas: about 30% of girls in their respective schools. The government has started taking similar initiatives in the other parts of the country and, while launching one of our community hostels, the First Lady not only commented on our efforts but also challenged the district authorities to set aside more budget to support this.

One of the activities that ActionAid Uganda was deeply engaged in was advocating for the education rights of children displaced by war in the north of the country. This work started in 2003 by mobilising district education actors in war-affected districts and creating a loose network of issue-based advocates through the initiative. A strong platform for education in conflict called the Northern Region Education forum was formed, which acted as the mouthpiece for championing displaced children's right to education. The forum's unique nature was its core membership, made up mainly of district civil servants who were organised to advocate to their employer. This resulted in an integrated approach to education delivery in the districts affected by war. All the line ministries – including defence, education, public service, health, gender, the office of the prime minister and donor agencies – were mobilised and had a uniform approach rather than previous unit interventions. Affirmative action for these children to join secondary school was mooted, examinations were for the first time flown to the actual exam and the policy on educationally disadvantaged children was strengthened to include children in conflict. The forum is now a fully registered NGO to address such concerns.

ActionAid Zambia highlighted a school construction project implemented with the community, where skills learned are transferred to the community. Seeing the effective management of the project by the community and their commitment to participate, the Ministry of Education listened to calls from the people and allocated an extra classroom block. This was only possible because ActionAid and the community had done half of the work. ActionAid Zambia recognises that a rights-based approach and true partnership requires honest dialogue and recognition of the fact that our government has limited resources allocated to rural areas, and while advocacy continues at national level, children are being denied a right to education. This is not because the Ministry of Education does not care, but because they cannot afford to build schools everywhere. Our intervention ensured that children in another area where ActionAid does not work were able to benefit from an extra classroom block as ActionAid has already constructed one at the project site.

1.1 Working in partnership: enhancing girls' basic education in northern Nigeria

The *enhancing girls' basic education in northern Nigeria* (EGBENN) project is funded by Oxfam Novib and managed by ActionAid to support and strengthen civil society current initiatives to accelerate girls' access to basic quality education. Six CSOs work closely with local communities setting up girls' clubs, supporting the establishment of SMCs, and creating *Reflect* circles to sensitise communities about the value of girls' education and their rights to services, and to support them to demand their rights.

The review of the EGBENN project – including in-depth

interviews with local partners, showed that there was a rigorous process for selecting partners. Local organisations identified the benefits of partnership with ActionAid as the training and capacity development support they received. Local partners frequently referred to the training opportunities they received from ActionAid Nepal, including training on *Reflect* and in some cases visits to other countries. They feel this empowered them as organisations to work effectively with local communities. One local partner stated that through ActionAid Nigeria they "*learnt how to talk to big people*". They believe that such training has collateral benefit, as they could use it to secure other work. ActionAid Nigeria was consistently described as being focused, *results-orientated and getting things done*.

Local partners and communities also pointed out challenges in their relationship with ActionAid. Both felt that they were not fully involved in the design of the project from inception, but were rather brought in once this was done. One local community member stated that they first found out about ActionAid "*when they came to tell us we were selected to be part of the project*". From this it is clear that, while there was a greater deal of engagement and involvement of local partners and communities in the project as it unfolded, this was not the case in the beginning. ActionAid Nigeria staff noted that this was indeed the case, but much of the design had been preset by the funder, Oxfam Novib.

Another key issue for local partner organisations was that they felt they did not have full financial control and say over how monies were spent. This was manifest in statements such as "*ActionAid specified what we can spend the money on*" and "*ActionAid specifies how much we can spend on staff on this project*". They also pointed out that the monies received were not always on time and that it was insufficient to the volume and intensity of work required, leading some to describe ActionAid as "*too much action, too little aid*". Specific aspects raised included the need for additional finances for transport, an increase in the *per diem* allowance and the allowance for community meetings. However, speaking to ActionAid it is clear that a key issue is to ensure that partners are able to effectively manage their finances and disburse funds with prudence and probity.

Interaction with local communities suggested that they found the relationships with ActionAid beneficial. Without fail, the comments were overwhelming positive. It was quite clear that members of the local community were aware of a rights-based approach, mentioning making "*claims on duty bearers and in holding government to account*". Yet it was also evident that for the local community a rights-based approach was as much about changes to their material conditions and the provision of services as about making claims. Thus, local communities cited the building of schools and the provision of electricity transformers as material goods that changed their lives.

The community was clear about the role of ActionAid Nigeria. On the one hand, it was a catalyst for empowerment and an agent for change through the provision of training and other forms of support. In this

respect, for the community there was no distinction between the local partner organisations and ActionAid Nigeria, and they often spoke about the two interchangeably. This suggests that even if ActionAid Nigeria works through local organisations it is still considered as a key actor. On the other hand, the community consistently mentioned that there was a need ActionAid to help build schools, bring textbooks and train teachers. It was clear that ActionAid was seen as a service delivery provider in some respect, but mainly as a catalyst to support communities secure such provisioning: people told us that once local communities and organisations were empowered, official and authorities acted more speedily as “*they know ActionAid was watching*”.

Local organisations and communities were asked about sustainability in relation to what would occur if ActionAid Nigeria withdrew. Here there was a unanimous view that the benefits from the relationship were the investment in capacity building through training and the facilitation of empowerment, which would ensure that communities are able to continue to demand their rights and local organisation are able to continue with their work. However, it was noted that the loss of financial support, particularly for the local organisations, would be a blow and that ActionAid Nigeria should work towards an effective exit strategy. The view of ActionAid as facilitator of empowerment and capacity building was expressed by one community leader as follows: “*If they withdrew we will still be trained, we will still have trained individuals, we will still be able to ask questions, we will still be able to talk to our local official... However, we will always keep in touch as child is with its mother.*”

The detailed review of EGBENN and our education work in Nigeria reveals four key aspects of the nature of ActionAid education work in general:

- Much of ActionAid’s efforts are directed toward capacity building and support using various methodologies and tools, including Reflect. While it is not explicitly stated or analysed, there is a clear case to be made that moving towards a rights-based approach does imply extensive investment in capacity building.
- For local communities, rights and a rights-based approach are only meaningful if they result in changed material circumstances. Rights must lead to better service delivery – if this is not the case then communities become disempowered, dispirited and alienated.
- In many instances, ActionAid is both a partner and financier. While this tension is managed effectively, there needs to be more explicit acknowledgement of this and a clearer articulation of good practice in being both partner and financier. Particular attention should be paid to ensuring that ActionAid does not “take over” smaller organisations; reflexivity in the partnership is especially important to confront power dynamics.
- Good practice in empowerment must begin with the overall programme design – involvement and participation during delivery is important, but so is being there at the start.



Part two

The bigger picture: international advocacy in national education work in Sierra Leone

By Hannah Beardon

2.1 Introduction: the value of education in Sierra Leone

When I ask 10-year-old kids what they want to be when they grow up I expect to hear at least half of them say footballer, pop star, airline pilot or something else lucrative and glamorous. I was struck by the answers the schoolchildren of Sierra Leone gave me: president, doctor or teacher. These kids do not aspire to quick money and fame, but to working hard to help their families, communities and their country. I was also conscious that, despite a decade of civil war in such recent memory, no aggression or hostility is felt in the street, the market or the playground. “*Sierra Leoneans love each other*”, I was told. When I asked how people had so quickly and successfully left behind the aggression of conflict in favour of collaboration and cooperation, people pointed to the rehabilitation and peace education done in schools.

It may be for this reason, or because during the conflict people saw the support that educated people abroad were able to give their families, that most Sierra Leonean parents place great value on the education of their children. Those who have some kind of stable income are likely to spend a large proportion of it on fees for private schools, even if this means sacrificing other basic needs. The poorest families, who send their children to state school, make just as big sacrifices. Amanata, a 10-year-old girl in year three of a Freetown primary school, left her village and family to live with an aunt in the city so she can attend school. Meanwhile, her father sends her as much as he can afford to pay for at least a couple of the textbooks she needs, and make the requested contributions to school equipment and management. This faith placed in the power of education to generate personal, community and even national development is underwritten by the government of Sierra Leone, who with the 2004 Education Act introduced free and compulsory basic education (up to third year of secondary) for all, and abolished school fees in public schools.

Yet despite this apparent commitment to quality, meaningful education from children, parents and the government, the reality of the public school system in Sierra Leone is not in any way conducive to these kinds of outcomes. In the capital, Freetown, primary school classes are of over 80 children, sometimes as many as 120, to one teacher. In the school I visited, one classroom was being used for three different classes at the same time. There were only four or five benches and two or three desks for the whole class to

use, and not a textbook in sight. The teacher, already with a near impossible job to keep such a big class engaged and interested, had to compete with the noise of other classes, and had only a chalk and blackboard as teaching aids. The pay and conditions for teachers are so bad, that most of them are on constant lookout for a way out of the profession. The head teachers and management committees are weighed down by such overwhelming need and lack of resources to deal with even the most urgent priorities. In most cases, they end up asking for parental contributions for repairs and equipment, undermining the government pledge of free basic education for all. In reality, most of the 10-year-olds I met, despite their own and their parents' not insignificant sacrifices to keep them at school, were functionally illiterate.

So where does the problem lie? Why is there such a difference between dreams and reality, between plans and commitments and delivery on the ground? Is it simply a question of financing? Is there a lack of political will to deliver free, quality education for all, despite all the fine words? Does a country still struggling to rebuild its infrastructure and skills after the destruction of the war need more time and capacity support to create a strong and stable education system? And what is the role of ActionAid, their partners and other civil society groups active in education in Sierra Leone to narrow this gap?

This report is focused on one aspect of ActionAid's work on education in Sierra Leone, as part of an international policy advocacy project assessing the impact of International Monetary Fund (IMF) policies and conditions on education spending in poor countries. However, in telling the story of how that international issue was adopted and translated into national and local level education work, it also reveals how the complex and intertwined issues of capacity, financing and development relationships define the strategic choices available for rights-based advocacy work at national level. It also explores the implications of this for international or multinational advocacy and campaigning relationships.

2.2 Exposing the contradictions: the IMF, development commitments and social spending

"Sierra Leone is a donor-driven country. We have realised it and now we are trying to fight back and see our own development."

ActionAid partner AMNET

One hypothesis as to why the government's stated commitment to quality, free education has failed to bear fruit is that fundamental decisions defining government spending priorities and capacity are actually made, or at least heavily influenced, by the IMF. Despite large mineral resources, Sierra Leone is a very poor country with only US\$800 GDP per capita in 2008, ranking 222 out of 229 countries in the world according to the CIA fact book.¹¹ Even this low income is deceptive, because the richest 10% of the population actually control nearly half of that wealth. Tax revenue is very low, and the private sector is practically non-existent. This, coupled with the dire need for investment in infrastructure and social services after the war, means Sierra Leone is heavily reliant on donors to support government expenditure.

Donors, especially bilateral agencies such as DFID and multilateral institutions like the World Bank, are well aware of the threat of weak government and corruption to the effectiveness of their aid. They aim to support governments to deliver the basic services necessary in order to lay the foundations for strong development, and yet are not always best placed to assess whether the current government is well placed to deliver. The IMF has therefore taken on the role of assessing, and in some cases improving, credit-worthiness of poor nations and their governments. Their credit ratings are very important for countries in order to attract the donor funding they so desperately need. While I think we could all agree that we should only be funding and supporting governments who are truly working for the benefit of their people, of course in reality this is a very difficult, and political, assessment to make. Critical assessments of the political agenda of international financial institutions, and particularly the IMF, are therefore a key part of understanding development relationships and opportunities for change.

In this vein, ActionAid USA conducted research into the impact of IMF policies on the ability of poor countries to meet their commitments to fight HIV and AIDS.¹² This work highlighted the severe limitations on fiscal space (and as a result social spending) imposed on governments by their acceptance of the IMF's macroeconomic prescriptions. In pursuit of economic stability, the IMF urge poor countries to stabilise inflation at a low rate and keep public deficits low, both of which imply restrictions on much needed spending on public sector workers and services. ActionAid USA's IMF research found a worrying lack of debate, or awareness, of the range of

¹¹ See <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sl.html>

¹² ActionAid et al. *Blocking progress: How the fight against HIV/AIDS is being undermined by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.* (September 2004). www.actionaid.org/docs/77_1_blocking_progress.pdf and *Changing Course: Alternative Approaches to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals and Fight HIV/AIDS* ActionAid USA September 2005: http://www.actionaid.org.uk/doc_lib/131_1_changing_course.pdf

monetary and fiscal policies which poor countries could adopt in order to fund their development. In practice, this means that the IMF treatment, despite undermining commitments to the Millennium Development Goals, is almost always accepted without challenge. This research inspired ActionAid's IET to develop its own research and analysis on the impact of the IMF on education spending.¹³ At the same time, other organisations were conducting their own research into the impact of the IMF on health spending in developing countries.¹⁴

The researchers found that the macroeconomic policies promoted by the IMF not only impose strict limitations on public borrowing and spending, but sometimes explicitly set ceilings for the amount spent on public sector workers, such as nurses and teachers, and may even negotiate actual caps on the number of teachers, as happened in Sierra Leone. The fact is that the arguments for and against these types of macroeconomic policies are political – whether to borrow to allow more social spending and generate greater national development and income potential in the long term, or whether to create a stable economy as the basis for private sector development and investment and in that way achieve trickle-down social benefits. However, the research found that the IMF's chosen policies are not presented or promoted as political doctrine with valid alternatives, but as economic logic or wisdom. More worryingly, they are not opened up to public debate but adopted by governments in closed-door discussions, despite their great short-term social and economic impact.

In alliance with ActionAid USA, IET has attempted to build alternative, or critical, macroeconomic analysis and debate through evidence of the impact of public sector wage bill caps and other IMF policies and conditions on the ground. ActionAid teams in Sierra Leone, Malawi and Mozambique all developed their own research and evidence to build the argument that these conditions are undermining attempts to meet the Millennium Development Goals and reduce poverty. This analysis has contributed to, and been complemented by, macroeconomic literacy training for civil society actors in the US and participating countries, and policy influencing and campaigning work with the IMF in Washington.

The IMF project in Sierra Leone

The IMF project was enthusiastically taken up by ActionAid Sierra Leone, who had already been very involved in building a national education campaign coalition, and were striving to make the transition from providing direct support and services to supporting the rights of poor and marginalised people. While people's right to education is being compromised at the very basic level by a lack of infrastructure and investment, ActionAid Sierra Leone hoped that this analysis might help to better understand the potential impact of policy advocacy in delivering this right. In turn, this would help to clarify the role of a national/international NGO such as ActionAid in supporting

national government and civil society to deliver the necessary services and rights. In particular, the objective of the national project was to build the capacity of, and space for, civil society to engage in and contribute to macroeconomic policy debates. This complements the ongoing and widespread economic literacy and budget analysis (ELBAG) work, which focuses on the delivery of planned and promised services at a local grassroots level.

The IMF project in Sierra Leone evolved directly out of the international research on the impact of IMF conditions on HIV and education, and linked into other national research and campaigning processes, including a shadow report on progress towards the Millennium Development Goals in Sierra Leone and the aid effectiveness work of the Global Call against Poverty (GCAP) platform. Rick Rowden, who had led the international research, spent time discussing and contextualising the issues of economic frameworks with actors in Sierra Leone and helped the ActionAid team identify suitable partners for the project. In the end eight partners were identified, including unions, advocacy networks, and groups working on education, gender, health and HIV. However, two of the initial partners disengaged from the process early on, concerned that the project was too ambitious and too confrontational, and in particular for fear that their funders were among the actors being targeted or criticised. The project involved three main strands:

- macroeconomic training
- research on the impact of IMF public sector wage bill ceilings on education
- national and international policy engagement.

Box 1: Partners to the process – AMNET

AMNET are a national (Sierra Leone) human rights advocacy organisation. In Kambia district they built dialogue with local leaders, chiefs, teachers and religious leaders, to get commitment against the early initiation of girls, including female genital mutilation, which is a health hazard and leads to early marriage and school dropout. In Western Area near Freetown, AMNET provide study scholarships to street children and microcredit to their parents, to enable the children to go to school. They also monitor the children's progress in school.

AMNET took part in the macroeconomic trainings and are part of the EFA coalition. They develop materials and activities to inform and sensitise people about the right to education. They run advocacy campaigns to build on the work of the GCE to remind the authorities of the promises they made, through radio discussions and public forums with politicians and education officials. They consider the issue of teacher recruitment to be among the most important for the right to a quality of education.

¹³ActionAid. *Contradicting commitments: How the achievement of Education for All is being undermined by the International Monetary Fund*. September 2005. www.actionaid.org/assets/pdf/contradicting_commitments4.pdf

¹⁴Center for Global Development. *Does the IMF constrain health spending in poor countries?* (April 2007). www.cgdev.org/section/initiatives/_active/imfprograms/evidence

Macroeconomic training

The training, provided for partners and other key education policy stakeholders, covered basic macroeconomic concepts, the history of macroeconomic policy in Sierra Leone, current macroeconomic policies (including IMF tools and conditions, such as the poverty reduction growth facility and the medium-term expenditure framework) and the influences on macroeconomic decision-making. The Ministry of Finance and the Central Bank contributed to the initial trainings and presented information on their macroeconomic frameworks. However, government was not involved simply as an input to the process, but has also been targeted for sensitisation and capacity building. Feedback on the trainings was good; according to the project coordinator the participants were enthusiastic about the subject and felt able to relate it to their everyday lives.

Research on the impact of IMF public sector wage bill ceilings on education

IET commissioned research to contribute evidence to a wider picture of the impact of IMF policies for direct advocacy and engagement with the IMF in Washington.¹⁵ However, the research process was also significant in building the evidence for ActionAid Sierra Leone and partners to contest national education policies and forward alternative policies, including arguments for more teacher recruitment. Samuel Braima, the economist and lead researcher for the macroeconomic literacy trainings and research, is a lecturer in applied economics at the University of Sierra Leone in Freetown. He had already seen a clear link between economic policy and overcrowded classrooms, and saw the research as an opportunity to investigate the link between the IMF and the Ministry of Finance further, and bring this aspect into public debate.

The research did find evidence of severe underinvestment in teachers, translating into high pupil-teacher ratios, high teacher turnover and over-reliance on untrained and unqualified teachers, especially in remote rural areas. The research attributed this underinvestment to the IMF-imposed cap on the public sector wage bill.

National and international policy engagement

To strengthen the accountability of the IMF to the citizens of Sierra Leone, ActionAid ran public awareness events and debates prior to the bi-annual IMF mission visits. This work made ActionAid Sierra Leone more visible to the IMF country representative, and they were able to use this visibility to coordinate much broader civil society engagement in IMF discussions.

In 2007 IET published *Confronting the Contradictions*¹⁶,

which highlighted the impact of IMF-imposed wage bill ceilings on education, based on country studies from Sierra Leone, Mozambique and Malawi. The report was launched at the same time as two others: a report on the impact of IMF conditions on health services by the Center for Global Development¹⁷, and an independent evaluation of the IMF in sub-Saharan Africa, which linked under-utilisation of available aid in poor countries to the IMF's macroeconomic policy influence.¹⁸ To capitalise on this flurry of reports, ActionAid organised a panel at the IMF spring meetings, and generated public debate with the IMF on the arising issues. Senior ActionAid Sierra Leone staff were involved in presenting and debating the research to the panel.

2.3 Achievements of the work on the IMF

"ActionAid is doing a good job. Before, the IMF used to come and go and we didn't even know. Now we have a very narrow space; we are hoping to widen that space to galvanise ourselves and get more information on the IMF."

Sierra Leone Teachers' Union (SLTU)

ActionAid Sierra Leone's contribution to the international campaign on the IMF public sector wage bill ceilings had various objectives: to enable recruitment of more teachers; to open spaces for civil society to influence and work with government on the poverty reduction growth facility and other restrictive macroeconomic frameworks; and to strengthen the capacity of national civil society to engage in, and understand, these types of high-level policy-making processes and dynamics. Furthermore, this type of work looking at the impact of IMF policies and conditions on the delivery of social services also ties into broader work to build necessary capacity, networks and research in support of strong and accountable governance in Sierra Leone.

During my time in the country, I listened to many different actors who were influential in the education sector, and people working to improve or support quality education from the grassroots, and was able to identify general trends of growth of awareness, capacity and more open decision-making. There are also a couple of examples of direct policy change. However, change of policy in Washington, or even Freetown, is very far from change in reality on the ground – in schools. The changes flowing from this kind of research and advocacy project are more diffuse and integral, they contribute to the achievement of quality Education for All goals, rather than constituting direct successes.

Policy change

Since the research was launched the IMF have officially

¹⁵ Braima, S and Gbla, O. *Impact of the public wage bill cap on teachers: Follow-on study on the impact of International Monetary Fund (IMF) policies on the achievement of the education Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Sierra Leone*. ActionAid Sierra Leone, August 2007.

¹⁶ ActionAid. *Confronting the contradictions: The IMF, wage bill caps and the case for teachers*. April 2007. www.actionaid.org/assets/pdf%5CAACConf_Contradictions_Final2.pdf

¹⁷ Center for Global Development. *Does the IMF Constrain Health Spending in Poor Countries? 2007*.

¹⁸ Independent Evaluation Office of the IMF. *The IMF and aid to sub-Saharan Africa*. 2007. www.ieo-imf.org/eval/complete/pdf/03122007/report.pdf

dropped their promotion or condition of public sector wage bill ceilings in poor countries. However, in practice the ceilings are still in place in many countries, including Sierra Leone. Whether or not this policy change can be attributed to the work of ActionAid and other CSOs, it is an important shift. Nationally the work also contributed to policy change. In 2008, the Minister of Education made a public commitment to lower pupil-teacher ratios to 40:1 through increased teacher training and recruitment, as a result of broad public pressure.

Interestingly, it was a combination of the national and international work that brought about this policy change. The IET's work on the impact of wage-bill ceilings on education quality fed into the decision by the GCE to focus their 2008 week of action on the issue of teacher recruitment. Sierra Leonean civil society actors, in particular the members of the EFA coalition, were able to bring the national research to bear during the GCE global week of action to make the case for increased teacher numbers. However, while the minister did succumb to this pressure and publicly commit to increase numbers of trained teachers, this policy was later quietly reversed.

Awareness of the role and influence of the IMF

"If you depend on someone to give you something to do your work and they don't give it to you, it means you are going backwards, not forwards."

Head teacher

The training, research and debate generated by the IMF project have without doubt raised awareness of the role of the IMF in defining public policy in Sierra Leone. The IMF public sector wage bill ceilings are now part of the discourse of civil society groups working on education and governance. The issue was also highlighted specifically in the Sierra Leone government's education sector plan, which recognises that reducing the existing pupil-teacher ratio (of 112 pupils per qualified teacher) is made impossible by "a ceiling on teacher employment made necessary by Ministry of Finance/ IMF requirements". It goes on to state that: "Unless the wage bill is expanded to increase the adequate number of teachers required (not just a nominal increase per year), the millennium development /EFA goal of universal primary education by 2015 will not be realised."

This is indicative of a wider shift in the debate around education from a focus on access to policy and financing. The teachers' unions have also been able to make the link between limited teacher recruitment and macroeconomic policy, and have fed this information through to their members. This new awareness has not only broadened mobilisation, but has also strengthened the case of the people and organisations working on these issues.

Awareness of the dynamics of policy-making

"Translating the education sector plan into quality education for all cannot be an event. We need to build further awareness of the dynamics of how macroeconomic policies are created."

Madiana Samba,
ActionAid Sierra Leone education coordinator

More generally, awareness has grown of the dynamics of policy-making and the impact on education right along the line. Local education stakeholders are more aware of the role of government policy in the day-to-day problems of school management, and civil society actors are more conscious of the threat to autonomy of a state dependent on donor funds. This informs the everyday analysis and decision-making of these groups and builds the capacity of civil society as a whole to challenge and change government policies.

An important part of this awareness is that government is not a homogeneous entity. Nobody, not even within key ministries and the central bank, was able to give the researchers a definitive story on how macroeconomic policies and targets are set; civil society actors and education officials are now aware that the process is not so much one of negotiation, but more of accepting conditions and benchmarks set by external parties, in other words the IMF. The resulting lack of transparency and accountability for decisions which have a deep impact on the lives of citizens has implications for the way people engage with government, and is informing the strategies for campaigning, networking and partnership building of different civil society actors.

Civil society involvement in debate

"We used to take things for granted. Now, instead of drawing immediate conclusions, we conduct surveys, get findings."

Member of ActionAid partner WABEAN

"It is better to discuss rather than swallow what is given."

EFA coalition member

The awareness, research and focus on building collaborative relationships has resulted in an increase in space for civil society to engage in policy and challenge decision-makers, including the government and the IMF. In particular, people pointed out how the IMF has become more open and more approachable. Whereas the IMF previously conducted their business with Sierra Leone from their offices in Washington and held closed-door meetings with the Ministry of Finance, they have now allocated a representative based in the region. Although this was not a result of the campaigning, it has facilitated other developments in civil society engagement and action for example, they actively engage with NGOs like ActionAid, informing them when they are due to visit and inviting them to meetings. Because of ActionAid's commitment to strengthening the role of civil society in governance this space is to some extent accessible to national partners and the engagement can be more diverse.

The potential for civil society to engage in debate and influence decision-making in Sierra Leone is protected by the government's commitment to democracy, and ActionAid has been careful to build collaborative relationships the government in order to enhance the voice of the people. Sam Braima, the economist who did the IMF research with ActionAid summed up this approach: "We aim for the government not to look at us as antagonists. We are

here to help them, to voice what the populace want.” Officials from the Ministry of Finance contributed to the training, and parliamentarians and education officials were engaged to build awareness of the role of macroeconomic policies and the relationships behind finance policy decisions. This has helped to build a stronger and broader space for civil society to engage in policy, and in particular, the visibility and influence of organisations like ActionAid and large civil society coalitions.

As well as creating new spaces for engagement and dialogue, the training has enabled partner organisations to make better use of existing channels of influence. For example, there is a tripartite committee involving the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Finance and the teachers’ unions to discuss problems facing the education sector. Since receiving the training, the unions have been able to use the space to challenge some of the funding decisions behind the understaffing issues, using the new capacity to revitalise the relationship. A representative of the SLTU told me: *“It is a sign of political will that the space is there; now we are waiting to see how effective it will be.”*

Increased visibility for ActionAid Sierra Leone

“Since we started the IMF work we have gained credibility and future work has been able to build on that foundation. Each time we bring new research out people are interested.”

Thomas Johnny
ActionAid Sierra Leone policy coordinator

ActionAid Sierra Leone currently enjoys considerable visibility and credibility in national education policy research and advocacy. Policy-makers (including the IMF and government), peers and partners see ActionAid as a legitimate representative of civil society voices and concerns in the policy process. The IMF research has clearly contributed to this profile, as has the international dimension to this work, in terms of civil society’s confidence to engage in international policy processes. Based on this, ActionAid has been able to proactively engage in public policy and finance processes – for example working with the World Bank to get the public finance monitoring grant set up, which aims to fund civil society actors to monitor government policy and implementation.

In education, ActionAid is part of the Development Partners’ Group, a consortium of key education policy-makers and donors such as UNICEF, INGOs, the World Bank and the Ministry of Education. Given their strong and trusted position as a partner to civil society groups, this legitimacy and space for ActionAid contributes to strengthening the voice Sierra Leonean civil society has in policy-making. However, although ActionAid Sierra Leone operates as a national civil society partner, in practice it occupies this space as an international organisation investing in education. In the long term this bridging relationship between civil society and government needs to be reassessed to ensure that new capacity for direct and coordinated civil society policy advocacy can happen directly and independently. Furthermore, involvement in this international project has

Box 2: Partners to the process – WABEAN

The Western Area Budget Advocacy Network (WABEAN) is a network of 27 members – including farmers, boat owners, youth, sports and community development organisations – who came together on the back of ActionAid’s ELBAG budget tracking training to build the capacity of community groups to monitor the commitments of their government. ActionAid has provided technical and financial support. Members voluntarily give their time, and even space, to meet.

The Education Act 2004, which enshrines the right to free basic education, provides WABEAN with a legal basis for their work on education. They conducted a survey of 120 schools in Freetown and launched a report showing that knowledge of education policy among citizens was too low for them to meaningfully demand their rights. So they took to their communities to popularise the act, distributing copies, holding community meetings and working with school authorities and management committees.

“People need to know that their children can’t be denied access to education because of their ability to pay” they told me. School fees have been abolished and yet the subsidies allocated to schools per registered pupil are not getting through, leaving the schools without any funds to operate. WABEAN work with SMCs to track whether the money arrives, what it is spent on and to identify waste and corruption.

They were able to expose wasteful procurement rules which did not allow schools to purchase items locally and successfully challenged the payments made to the multinational company KPMG for managing the subsidy payments. They have developed relationships with the Ministries of Finance and Education to get the information they need, and work with the press and local radio (some of their members are journalists). They also get information and support from the SLTU.

WABEAN’s work creates tensions, not only with the government officials, but also with local head teachers, who worry that they are going to expose embezzlement. *“We are working in isolation and that makes us very vulnerable.”* However, the capacity of its members is growing, and plans to expand nationwide should ease this isolation. Ultimately, the network hopes to get right into the heart of policy-making and get involved in the formulation of the budget and the discussion of alternative macroeconomic policies.

given ActionAid Sierra Leone valuable experience of contributing to the wider knowledge of ActionAid International. According to Tennyson Williams, director of ActionAid Sierra Leone, this has given them more visibility and credibility within the wider organisation, and more experience and confidence to engage in global policy issues.

Strengthening other work and analysis

In a country with as many immediate, urgent needs and such limited public resources as Sierra Leone, the way the government chooses to prioritise spending will always be contentious. The research into and reporting of the relationship between the IMF and government choices on financing education is informative for many other themes in development. The national research has contributed to the development of analysis and advocacy regarding governance more broadly, and provided tools for the GCAP coalition to increase the mobilisation of civil society. Sam Braima, the economist working on the IMF project, has focused much of his academic research and publications, on the issue of privatisation (and IMF influence in this policy), and has involved some of the partners from the macroeconomic literacy training.

ActionAid policy and governance staff are trying to channel the knowledge, capacity and momentum built by the IMF work into a Justice in Development Network, which will coordinate the response of civil society to international financial institutions. Civil society groups themselves are also broadening their vision for engagement in governance. WABEAN, which grew out of the ELBAG project and received the macroeconomic training, is hoping to create a national network of budget monitoring groups to be able to influence national policy more effectively from the grassroots. This feeds into work that Christian Aid is doing in Sierra Leone to build a budget advocacy network, bringing in more civil society partners to strengthen the voice even further.

2.4 Reality check: if policies have shifted why is education getting worse?

“Not a single teacher will tell you the working conditions in this country are good.” WABEAN member

“Children who are finishing junior secondary school cannot even write a friendly letter.” EFA coalition member

The list of achievements and changes I saw and heard about in Sierra Leone is considerable, and important. Things are changing, and there is a growing recognition that public policy needs actors from both government and civil society. Meeting with ActionAid partners and members of the EFA coalition, I was impressed by their commitment and positive approach, especially considering the overwhelming

Box 3: What are the priorities for education in Sierra Leone?

According to teachers’ unions and community groups who work with ActionAid Sierra Leone on education, the issues are very basic:

1. **POLITICAL WILL** – health and education are not priorities for the current government. Only the very basics of education are planned for, and adult and early childhood education are not given sufficient attention.
2. **TEACHERS** – enough well-trained teachers, in the right places, with fair pay and conditions.
3. **CLASSROOMS AND EQUIPMENT** – enough space, desks and chairs for the number of children, and offices for the school managers. Adequate number and quality of teaching and learning materials. (this point was the most urgent according to the SMCs).
4. **SECURITY** – for girls, many of whom are vulnerable to sexual violence or intimidation on their journey to school, in school or from their guardians when living away from home. Pregnant girls have to leave school.
5. **FINANCING** – sufficient and timely government funds, donors meeting their commitments, removal of the cap on teacher recruitment.

These priorities are focused on the actual delivery of education, and do not take into account the monitoring of educational outcomes, for which there is currently almost no capacity in the country.

According to UNICEF, however, the priority issue for education is the lack of clear, credible data on pupil and teacher numbers. They are supporting work to verify teacher numbers and develop a management information system. Although the education sector plan does address some of the issues of concern to teachers and parents, a lack of funding means that the education system has to work within existing constraints – in many cases leaving international NGOs and UNICEF to support teacher training and the building of classrooms or to provide alternative, non-formal education services.

problems and challenging circumstances. Civil society groups suffer from a lack of funding, coordination and capacity as well as being vulnerable to fragmentation, cooption and politicisation, they told me. Yet there has never been a greater call for strong, united representation of the needs and interests of the people of Sierra Leone in policy-making and holding public servants accountable. Classrooms are getting more crowded, resources more thinly stretched, and educational outcomes are suffering; and the finger of blame, or responsibility, is mostly pointed at the Ministry of Education, despite awareness of the influence of the IMF.

So how relevant is the IMF issue to education policy advocacy in Sierra Leone? And how can ActionAid build on this legitimacy, awareness, voice and capacity to ensure that education policy, spending and delivery meets the real needs of the people of Sierra Leone?

Chasing the buck: where are decisions made and changes generated?

The perfect model of policy advocacy goes something like this:

- a. Identify the problem – policy is not working for poor people or public commitments are not being translated into changes on the ground
- b. Gather evidence and build strong coalitions to strengthen the voice of poor and marginalised people
- c. Identify the targets – the people who can make change happen – and build relationships with policy-makers, allies and the media who can help you reach those targets
- d. Present the case and pile on the pressure until the relevant changes are made.

Those of us who live in long-established democracies are used to thinking of ourselves as tax-payers with rights and a legitimate voice not only to vote in elections, but to lobby and influence policies which affect us. Of course, powerful companies and pressure groups are even more successful at influencing the decisions that shape our countries, and the way public money is spent and issues are prioritised. However, this model is much more difficult to follow where the relationship between citizens and the state is not so clear, and the accountability of government is neither pushed from within the system, nor demanded by a conscious and mobilised citizenry.

The government: doesn't the buck stop here?

The government of Sierra Leone has ultimate responsibility for regulating the education system, and delivering public education services. The government has shown its commitment to free and compulsory basic education, signing up to the Education for All goals and bringing in the Education Act. More recently, the Ministry of Education has developed, with support from UNICEF, an education sector plan which sets out how the EFA goals and objectives will be implemented. While the plan is ambitious, it is also designed to be realistic, considering the resource and capacity limitations in the country, and does not actually project to meet all of the Millennium Development Goal targets. In particular, it does not attempt to improve the provision of early childhood care and falls far short of international expectations relating to adult literacy and tertiary education.

However, while the government are undoubtedly responsible for ensuring the provision of quality and sufficient education services, the lines of accountability and decision-making within government are not transparent, and the roles and actions of different actors can be confusing or even contradictory. While the Ministry of Education is

expected to lead the planning, development and delivery of a quality education system, crucial decisions relating to resourcing are made by the Ministry of Finance and parliament, who have to manage competing priorities. In reality, this means that education plans and budgets are under-funded, requiring cuts in activities, and dependency on donors to finance the shortfalls. The process by which these funding decisions are reached is poorly understood outside of central government, and accountability for the decisions are not made clear. The Ministry of Finance's economic policy research unit, for example, which informs monetary and fiscal policy, is not at all transparent. They do not produce publications or give any public explanation of their role, and to complicate matters further, many of the implementation functions – and a chunk of the education budget – have been decentralised to newly established local government bodies. So when bits of the education sector plan are not translating to services delivered on the ground, it is difficult for communities and civil society groups to tell where the problem lies.

For example, the SMCs that I met in Western Area on the outskirts of Freetown were incredibly frustrated at the lack of funding and scope to really make a difference to their schools. Struggling to fulfil their role without a standing budget, they see the major obstacle to achieving quality education in their schools as the abolition of school fees. Yet the abolition of school fees is considered by national and international education activists as a major step forward in ensuring that every child is able to access their right to education. In fact, the problem is that the subsidy designed to replace the school fees is not getting through to the schools, so the SMCs find themselves in a difficult position. And as their experience of relying on government support is not good, understandably they would rather depend on parents and locally present NGOs such as ActionAid to give them the money they need to keep the school functioning. They even suggested to me that ActionAid, who had proved its trustworthiness in the past, should manage the public subsidy system to ensure efficient disbursement of funds. Some of the larger civil society groups and networks understood the dynamic between the Ministries of Education and Finance better, but in reality the mechanisms for decision-making are not clear, making it practically impossible to assert meaningful influence.

The ActionAid Sierra Leone research suggests that the lack of trained, qualified teachers in the classroom is a direct result of government policies made within the restrictive macroeconomic limits established with, or by, the IMF. The EFA coordinator in the Ministry of Education, Horatio Nelson-Williams, agreed with this analysis:

“All the problems we are having are created by the IMF. They introduced mass retrenchments in the civil service which compromised the quality of performance, and the ceiling they impose on recruitment of teachers has resulted in a serious deterioration in education quality.”

However, other actors in education, including the Ministry of Finance and UNICEF, told me that there are in fact enough,

or even too many, teachers on the payroll. The problem, according to them, is ghost teachers: a payroll bloated by corruption and poor data management systems. I was told that high pupil-teacher ratios were a myth, despite seeing the problem with my own eyes, and it being confirmed by every school pupil I spoke to.

A principal economist from the Ministry of Finance policy and research committee emphasised that the government's macroeconomic policies were set only in the national interest, not according to the priorities of the IMF, although he admitted that they are in line with IMF policy. He explained that, although donors are involved in economic policy and spending decisions, they discuss rather than impose. However, while presenting a dynamic where spending decisions are based on social needs and an anti-poverty agenda, he actually revealed that the reverse is true – it is macroeconomic policy that defines the scope of government spending. He defended the government's reputation on education spending and support, on openness and inclusivity, and on poverty reduction. The reason there is not enough civil society engagement in this debate, he explained, is because there are not enough qualified people in civil society.

So how can these mixed messages be reconciled? How can you follow the policy advocacy model if you are just told that your arguments are not valid; if you cannot identify the targets – those who can, and must, make change happen? How can you do it when there is a severe lack of reliable, accurate and up-to-date data to use as evidence?

Can the government actually deliver quality education– and do they intend to do so?

“We know our government is also constrained. They may want to do all of these things but the money is not there.”

WABEAN member

Officially, Sierra Leone has met (or partially met) the targets that donors set for reconstruction and rehabilitation, and has now moved on to a phase of development. As is common during long-term conflict, schools and classrooms were destroyed, and a generation of children were deprived of their formal education. Anyone with enough skills left the country, destroying the indigenous private sector and draining the social sector of expertise. And despite the convenient analysis of donors, neither the physical infrastructure nor the private sector and professional class have recovered sufficiently to rebuild the economy and deliver development to the people of Sierra Leone. On top of all this, privatisation and foreign investment policies have stripped the government of most of its revenue, leaving it with only the 3% tax on exported minerals.

In terms of education, the reality reported to me was one where the government simply does not have the means to translate the vision of Education for All into practice. The Ministry of Education is dependent on foreign and non-governmental allies and donors, such as UNICEF or DFID, to support their own internal functions and deliver education services on the ground. The Ministry of Education's planning

directorate consists of one person, so it is not surprising that UNICEF provided support to draw up the education sector plan. However, this means that it was largely researched and written by an expatriate member of UNICEF staff. Local government, now the hub for delivering basic education, is so short of capacity that their staff ask ActionAid to provide transport and per diems to attend even a local meeting.

This lack of government capacity to manage and deliver education is partly due to funding, but even when funds are allocated, the capacity is not there to manage and disburse them properly. For example, Sababu, a large-scale World Bank supported project, provided US\$4 million to pay for much-needed textbooks and classroom buildings. Although the project is now ending, I was told that many of these textbooks have been sitting in storerooms at district level awaiting distribution to the schools. Weak government capacity means understaffed departments depending on underpaid staff, committed people trying to improve education without the necessary financial or human resources, or the required systems and structures to do so. This in effect translates into rural schools that are cut off from central, or even district, initiatives – whether this be distribution of funds and school books, visits by inspectors and teacher retention drives. And while it is normal that a ministry should be overwhelmed and under capacity after a long period of conflict, most of the actors I spoke to in Sierra Leone pointed to policy rather than context as the reason for underperformance.

Propping up the system: the role of the donors and the problem of accountability

“At district level everyone is just doing what they want.”

Ministry of Education official (to the Development Partners' Group meeting)

Where the government of Sierra Leone is unable to provide for basic rights and services, humanitarian organisations such as UNICEF and official donors such as DFID and the EU step in and fill the breach, propping up bits of the government's education sector with technical assistance, funding planning and implementation activities. UNICEF is the biggest single support to the government for education, and this ranges from support to planning, funding for central and district government activities, construction of schools, and provision of teacher training and methodologies. UNICEF also considers itself to have an important role in advocacy: working on factors that impede access to education – such as early marriage and teenage pregnancy – and supporting civil society to have greater access to, and influence over, policy, including that of the international community.

International NGOs such as ActionAid, Save the Children, Plan and Concern provide support in the communities where they work, funding school building projects, strengthening school management capacity and developing the learning environment, among other things. Though this is ultimately the work of the government, NGOs generally take care to ensure that the work they do strengthens the

Box 4: Chasing the donors – the case of the “slow-track initiative”

The fast-track initiative, international funding for delivering on education commitments, was agreed in 2007. Two years later, the money is still not available for use, because the criteria keep shifting. The education sector plan was developed, implementation and monitoring plans were established and a capacity building committee set up, all in response to negotiations with the donors. The memorandum of understanding has been agreed by parliament, but the funds have still not been disbursed. This places a big strain on education planning, both for public and non-governmental bodies. Madiana Samba, ActionAid Sierra Leone’s education coordinator, told me that, even when the money does come through, she is not convinced that it will be used for new education spending, rather than to support the existing education budget.

capacity of government to deliver quality education and of stakeholders such as parents and teachers to demand and monitor government commitments. For example, international NGOs support work on budget monitoring; with groups of girls dealing with issues of violence and sexual harassment; or with mothers’ clubs to enable them to support their children’s education.

However, the fact remains that donor accountability, coordination and coherence is not systematic. In effect, this further weakens the ability of the Ministry of Education to control delivery of the education sector plan, and further muddies the lines of accountability for education, which should clearly run from school to local and central government. In effect, this lack of accountability just adds to the problem of overdependence on charities, such as ActionAid, and the lack of effort to hold the government to account. In fact, the issue of donor dependence goes much deeper than this, and leaves the government vulnerable to influence from international institutions such as the IMF. While dependence on donors may reduce the scope for autonomous decision-making in ministries and parliament, it is a very brave minister or head of state that chooses an alternative. As Thomas Jonny, ActionAid Sierra Leone policy coordinator noted: *“Everyone who comes into government wants to be seen to be doing something. To free up from donor reliance will be a very difficult road to travel.”*

Helping the poor or letting government off the hook? The INGO balancing act

For many years now, organisations like ActionAid have been trying to shift away from service delivery – or filling the holes that governments leave in basic services for poor people. However, immediate needs are difficult to ignore, and children are in classes of 80-100, being taught by people with few qualifications and little motivation, without proper equipment or even books and pencils. When a government

with so much to do and so little capacity fails to provide the most basic education service to a community, it is little wonder they turn to an organisation like ActionAid that is actually present in the community, and has the capacity to help. The chair of one SMC told me: *“The government is the one who should be funding the schools, but they should fund ActionAid to build schools and pay subsidies because they are more reliable.”*

Yet, as the story so far illustrates, filling in the holes left by government not only creates dependency on ActionAid, but also weakens one of the best mechanisms for improving governance: public pressure.

Underpinning the approach used by ActionAid and most other international NGOs is a focus on strengthening the ability of people to demand services as rights from their government – and the ability of said governments to serve the needs of their people. In other words, the INGOs apply funds and expertise where it can help to build a stronger relationship between citizens and the state in pursuit of development based on fundamental and non-negotiable human rights. The question for ActionAid to consider is: what is stopping children from accessing their right to education? The rights-based approach suggests that the best role for ActionAid in the long term would be to ensure that policies are right, and that the mechanisms and skills are there for the government to deliver on their promises and for the people and their institutions to monitor government action. In summary, their focus is on *capacity building* and *policy advocacy*.

Policy advocacy:

“Not all of us are funded by ActionAid but we see their commitment to issues of national interest and we buy into their process. We need a leading organisation; we trust them to take that role.”

EFA coalition members

INGOs such as ActionAid are in a unique position to facilitate and strengthen policy advocacy. Over the years, they have developed long-standing and trusted relationships in the poorest and most marginalised communities, and yet they also operate in capital cities, regionally and internationally, and can speak the language of government. With their international links, they can access and share skills, advice and information which groups working locally or nationally may not have been exposed to previously. They have more power and influence with policy-makers, so they can open space for civil society to enter debates, or make powerful arguments on behalf of their partners. They can bring the international dimension into policy debates, highlighting the global external factors that have an impact on national policy decisions. All of this ActionAid Sierra Leone does well, and the people I met appreciated and praised them for their important role.

Capacity building:

“Reflect is a good mechanism to build monitoring and accountability into adult education and ActionAid does it better than anyone. They are well known and respected in Sierra Leone for linking with civil society at the grassroots.”

Chief of education, UNICEF

Creating space and representing the poor and marginalised in policy debates must be accompanied by the capacity of all actors to play their part, in order for the rights-based approach to have a sustainable impact. Again, organisations like ActionAid are well placed to work with a range of actors to support the in building a strong and well governed state, strengthening both the capacity for civil society to engage with, challenge and monitor government; and the capacity of government to fulfil their role in an efficient and transparent way.

Capacity building is more than skills training; it includes awareness, information, support and opportunities – such as networking and relationships – to enable people to achieve their goals. ActionAid works to build capacity in education with different groups, ranging from: parents and SMCs to improve school management; budget tracking groups or *Reflect* circles to enhance their monitoring potential; civil society groups and partners to build their campaigning and analysis skills; district councils and education officials to improve service delivery; and parliamentarians to sensitise them on their role in budget allocations.

Capacity building and policy advocacy are ActionAid's main tools for strengthening the position of poor and marginalised in countries like Sierra Leone. But in reality, where the government is so weak and the needs so great, it is difficult for ActionAid to ignore the call to directly provide services. Service delivery is like the third point in a triangle, with policy and capacity balancing the picture. As Madiana Samba, ActionAid Sierra Leone's education coordinator put it: *"We have to look at what is getting in the way of their rights. If it really is the need for a classroom, then we might support them to build one."*

This pragmatic approach to rights-based development is based on real needs, but complicates and possibly undermines work to build capacity, increase transparency and accountability, and influence policy. It is incredibly tricky to negotiate the dual roles of provider and facilitator, donor and enabler; and with communities so happy to receive help from ActionAid, it is difficult to expect them to hold the organisation accountable as part of their commitment to downward accountability and a rights-based approach. In effect, ActionAid is in a position to open up spaces for civil society to engage in policy, and is trusted to occupy those spaces on behalf of the poor with only their own conscience keeping them accountable. They are asking people to take responsibility for the development of their schools and communities on the one hand, while fulfilling that responsibility themselves on the other. This prompts people to look no further than ActionAid to solve their problems. This comment from a member of the EFA coalition illustrates the power that ActionAid needs to manage locally:

"If a local NGO calls a meeting with others they find it difficult to get people involved, whereas for ActionAid people will come as they hope for the best. They may be coming to see if they can get funding for their own things, but once they are aware and informed they will stay in the coalition."

Good citizens for good government: coordinating the voice of the people

"Civil society has an important voice in development. Just because a minister is Sierra Leonean doesn't mean he represents the people."

Tennyson Williams

Director, ActionAid Sierra Leone

"The government needs to consider civil society as partners in development, not as a threat. If they accept the criticisms of civil society, it would make them very effective. But they need to know how to pick the sense out of the nonsense of civil society."

WABEAN member

Box 5: The Sierra Leone Education for All coalition

The EFA coalition, an independent entity with its own secretariat since 2007, exists to coordinate CSOs working on education policy issues in Sierra Leone.

They focus their campaigning activities around the GCE Global Week of Action, support research and analysis of policy and progress towards EFA goals, and track budgets. While ActionAid has been instrumental in setting up and supporting the coalition, they have developed strong independent relationships with key stakeholders, including the Ministry of Education. Plan International is funding some of their current advocacy work.

The coalition's current campaign focus is on financing, an issue which emerged out of the IMF work. Previously the focus was on access to education for all, but the coalition is arguing that access without sufficient finance compromises quality. The coalition is developing a campaign and media strategy, and has delegated tasks to different members. ActionAid is charged with: fundraising and financing the campaign; mobilising and raising awareness of member organisations including unions; and coordinating the secretariat.

Throughout this story, I keep coming back to the role of civil society. A strong civil society is needed to hold government to account, to ensure that government is making the right decisions for the country and its people. People need to be organised into interest groups to have a clearer voice and more influence. Rick Rowden, who runs the IMF project in ActionAid USA, made it clear that the governments of countries such as Sierra Leone will not stand up to the IMF or consider alternative fiscal and monetary policies without pressure from their people to do so. Civil society needs to be able to engage in planning, monitoring and implementation from the local right up to the national level in order to have real impact, and to ensure that policy changes actually translate into the desired impact on the ground. WABEAN members were also clear about their role in scrutinising and influencing the public sector: *"Civil society has an onus to do independent research and use their findings to take an informed and independent stance."*

I met many people who give their time to improving the quality of education for their communities, or for others. But given the context in Sierra Leone, with overwhelming basic needs, distant and weak government and massive underemployment, it is very difficult to expect citizens' groups to be strong enough to take on this role. There are some influential groups, such as FAWE, a women's association that has built strong capacity, knowledge and partnerships over the years and is able to engage meaningfully and effectively on policy issues relating to women's rights. FAWE's membership includes many professional women, including some who work in government and large institutions such as UNICEF and ActionAid. The range of civil society groups that I met included teachers' unions, community-based organisations and national NGOs, coalitions and networks. Most are partners of ActionAid, working on direct provision of education, sensitisation, monitoring, capacity building and policy advocacy. The list of achievements they shared with me is impressive:

- **Changes in law and policy:** As a result of lobbying and campaigning by civil society, girls now have the right to free education in the north and the right to free primary education has become a government commitment. There have also been gains in campaigns on debt cancellation and negotiation of the HPIC agreement. WABEAN members also pointed out that as a direct result of their network's analysis and lobbying, the government terminated the KPMG fund distribution contract that was costing schools 10% of their subsidies.
- **Changes on the ground:** School enrolment has increased, especially for girls, although the education they receive is not truly free, nor of good quality. Similarly, the literacy rate has increased, although at 39% it is still extremely low.
- **Changing attitudes and awareness:** With the backing of new laws on education and gender, civil society has been able to do a lot of sensitisation, and attitudes to education, particularly among girls, have improved. Women are now more able, and likely, to participate in politics – not just as voters but also as candidates. Civil society provides a space, and an example, for women to develop leadership skills and experience. Furthermore, some of the sensitisation done by CSOs has enabled parents to stand up against compulsory contributions to school funds where this has got in the way of their child's education.
- **Changing dynamics of power and accountability:** Civil society as a constituency is getting stronger, bolder and more confident. As a result, there is more pressure on government to be accountable and they have set up a procurement office and anticorruption committee. However, there is still far to go. This is also true at the local level, where dialogue has been built between schools and parents. Some schools have set up information boards to make their management information transparent, and some parents are more able to challenge rights abuses. WABEAN explained this dynamic: *"The impact on the community is not immediate, but there are indicators. Now there are parents who challenge when their child is sent home because of fees. The school management are now afraid that people are enlightened."*

These achievements are evidence of roots in all the areas where civil society needs to be active to ensure that quality education for all becomes a reality. However, as Rick Rowden points out, unless there is broad participation in fiscal and monetary policy decisions, this can only amount to fiddling around the edges – because social spending is limited by current IMF-prescribed monetary policy to the degree where few meaningful choices are left to be made. So how can these roots and shoots of strong civil society engagement in governance be transformed into the kind of strong lobby that might actually persuade government to consider alternative macroeconomic policies?

Keeping the pressure on: the challenge of coordinated policy advocacy

"Civil society needs to contribute to planning, monitoring and policy dialogue. But in the rush to get things done and completed their voice can easily be missed." UNICEF

In reality, the opportunities for civil society to make a difference are very limited, and the challenge to build it into a strong partner for good governance is immense. Policy advocacy work requires a lot of skills, some quite technical, and the results can be very slow to see, especially on the ground. In particular, engagement with budget issues – and macroeconomic policy in particular – requires some level of specialist technical training. It is not only necessary to understand the economics, but also the dynamics of policy-making. Why has the budget been cut, and by whom? What and when is the best point for us to engage in that process? Civil society groups and networks need to be able to pay skilled people to coordinate and lead their engagement in these processes, and to follow up and make sure that decisions are implemented. Otherwise, gains can easily be reversed.

Policy advocacy is also by its nature political; it involves engaging with politics and taking a stand, which can make groups who are dependent on good relationships with donors and community leaders feel quite vulnerable. In fact, this type of fear of engagement in critical analysis and lobbying led to two of the initial partners in the IMF project to withdraw. So it can be very hard for civil society groups to find material or moral support for sustained and effective work on policy influencing. The CEF was a source of funding and training for advocacy work in education, and the EFA coalition are trying to put in place a national fund to expand ownership and support this type of work. However, the capacity for fundraising, and availability of resources, is low and the same friendly INGOs are approached time and again to support civil society advocacy projects.

In the face of these challenges, the civil society actors I spoke to were well aware of the need to work together and present a stronger, united voice to influence policy. WABEAN members noted that being part of a network has helped them build not only their skills and awareness, but also their strength.

Box 6: Challenges for civil society policy advocacy

Members of the Education for All coalition – including AMNET, FAWE, teachers' unions and WABEAN – listed the main challenges as:

- funding
- lack of training in advocacy
- difficulty in getting relevant information from government
- lack of coordination of civil society because of:
 - competition for funds
 - fragmentation
 - political interference
- negative perceptions:
 - populace seeing issues as political and partisan
 - government seeing civil society as a threat
- benchmarks not being harmonised and therefore difficult to track.

“People don't know our individual activities but now we are known by the EFA coalition, Oxfam, UNICEF, ActionAid. This leads us towards funding, and influence. It is a step in the right direction.”

WABEAN member

However, coordination is never an easy task at the best of times, as different actors are representing different interests and have different perspectives on the key issues or best strategies for achieving broader common goals such as Education for All. Small interest groups or local associations may find it relatively easy to take the ideas of all their members into account, to identify common ground and messages and to agree on strategic priorities and actions. Scale this up, and there is a big risk of civil society groups, who consider themselves to be the voice of the people, losing that crucial link. So, they need to consider how priorities are chosen and strategies decided, and who is included in those decisions. The quality of the decision-making or consultation process is fundamental to the legitimacy of CSOs, and as they begin to network and expand, this line of accountability becomes less clear.

Staying alive: keeping the politics out of policy

“If you want to be a real activist you have to steer clear of political affiliation. Once you take sides you are finished.”

WABEAN member

“When they know you are making noise, they give you a political appointment. They close your mouth.”

EFA coalition member

In the political environment of Sierra Leone there is certainly more opportunity for civil society groups to mobilise, criticise and challenge government policy. Tennyson compared Sierra Leone to other countries where ActionAid staff have been imprisoned (Ethiopia) or thrown out of the country (The Gambia) for such activities. However, even powerful lobby voices like ActionAid need

to tread carefully in order to stay on the right side of the decision-makers. And although the government officially have an open door policy, there is a limit to what they are willing to discuss or divulge. In fact, I was told that civil servants can be very secretive.

It is a tight line to walk between the voice of civil society and troublemaker, between maintaining an open door and friendly ear (or staying friendly and non-threatening as Tennyson put it) and tackling the fundamental issues of concern. How can organisations like ActionAid and their partners work with government, yet stay outside and critical? Although the NGOs I spoke to said they had cordial relationships with government, those who are investigating the role of government and monitoring their activities are considered with suspicion. People told me that ActionAid was a bold organisation; it is clearly respected by government and donors, and trusted by civil society to represent them in policy debates. But of course trade-offs need to be made in order to stay effective: policy advocacy is a constant balancing act.

ActionAid's success in navigating this tricky road in Sierra Leone is undoubtedly due in large part to the insight and skill of its management team. But without the resources and support that comes from being part of a large and experienced international organisation, this work would be even more difficult. National and local CSOs, such as the members of the EFA coalition and ActionAid partners, are much more vulnerable to political interference, cooption and fragmentation. For one thing, CSOs have to be registered with the government, so their very existence is under threat. This makes it very difficult to challenge or criticise the government, they told me: *“You can make noise on issues, but you can never take sides.”* In effect, this means that ActionAid's weaker and poorer partners have an even trickier path to negotiate.

2.5 National or international: where does the issue go from here?

“Macroeconomic policy is the change that would make the most impact on the poor.”

Thomas Jonny

Policy coordinator, ActionAid Sierra Leone

Everyone I spoke to, from schools to NGOs to government, has acknowledged that finance is the primary issue holding education back. No one from ActionAid, their peers or partners, denied the important influence of the IMF in the availability of funds for education. This is even stated in the Ministry of Education's sector plan. The IMF project has been a valuable and useful experience for all of those involved, building skills, awareness and evidence to engage on the issue of macroeconomic policy. However, many of these same people consider that focusing on the role and influence of the IMF, by which I mean targeting the IMF for change in policy and behaviour, is a waste of energy and resources. Thomas Jonny, who coordinates ActionAid Sierra Leone's policy and governance work,

said: “*Focusing on the IMF is like shooting water on a duck’s back. Little change on the ground is seen here.*” But this story shows that public engagement in macroeconomic policy choice is very important. The policies, which are the biggest defining factor in the availability of public services, are far from the consciousness of most of the people I met within NGOs, government and civil society. It is difficult to build a process that is mainstream and popular on such a dry, technical issue. People need to be able to see how monetary and fiscal policy affects them, their issues and their services. They need to be able to ask why it is made that way, in whose interests and what the alternatives are. The capacity and space for the whole range of actors – in civil society, NGOs, business and government – to debate these issues and influence national policy needs to be built up carefully and slowly in order to create a broad-based process which will not depend on ActionAid to keep going, but will take on a life of its own.

Rachel Moussié, who worked on the ActionAid IMF research in Mozambique, noted that direct engagement with the IMF at national level can be disempowering. Chasing the IMF without receiving any straight answers will sap the energy of activists over time, she said, and in the end a national focus to build strong coalitions to strengthen accountability and push for alternative national policies will be more productive. Both Rachel and Rick Rowden noted that these kinds of processes cannot be built up without funds; for one thing, the opportunity costs of attending meetings and trainings are very high for most civil society actors. Coalitions need funding and adequate staffing to ensure continuity in networking, analysis and skills building.

Penetrating the government-donor alliance: where can change happen?

“The IMF is creating constraints, and removing those would help to achieve EFA. But the IMF is only one side of the coin. The other side is government priority.” Madiana Samba

Education coordinator, ActionAid Sierra Leone

“International lobbying will not yield as much as we expected. We need to refocus at government level.”

Tennyson Williams
Director, ActionAid Sierra Leone

On the one hand, direct influencing of the IMF needs to happen in the North, focusing on their executive board and the governments who protect and support them. There may be some role for countries like Sierra Leone to support this with evidence of the impact of IMF policies, but this will not have a direct impact on the ground in Sierra Leone, so it has to be carefully managed. On the other hand, the power of the IMF to prescribe such tight fiscal and monetary policies could be undermined if the national governments were under pressure from their citizens to consider alternatives.

Thomas Johnny, ActionAid Sierra Leone’s policy coordinator, is clear that this is where the IMF research is leading them. He is initiating a series of activities to build on this and other work (including the Global Call against Poverty platform and networks working on education, debt, privatisation and mining) with debate and analysis of alternative macroeconomic policies. He also suggested that the questions which civil society needs to consider, pose and find answers to are broad and will help to contextualise the macroeconomic issues in terms of national development:

- How can we finance our own development?
- What are the needs, opportunities, priorities and resources available to finance our development?
- What is the role of the state?
- Who are the different donors? How do they use aid to influence policy?

The vision that ActionAid Sierra Leone is advancing now is one of a sovereign government of Sierra Leone with complete ownership over macroeconomic policy, able to fund the services they need without fear of inflation, using data and projections provided by their own, autonomous researchers. To do this they want to develop alternative policies. They want to be able to work with the Ministry of Finance’s economic policy research unit to understand how finance can be generated, and what data is needed to negotiate fairly and properly with the IMF. They want to work with parliamentarians to advance the arguments for negotiation on education financing, moving from partisan allegiances to genuine engagement with central government in the interests of the people. This, Tennyson pointed out, is “*a slow and uphill task*”.

2.6 Managing conflicting demands: taking the slow road to change

My overwhelming impression of the education work in Sierra Leone was one of need or lack, and this will have come out in this story. There is not enough money, political will, coordination or capacity; there are not enough schools, classrooms, books or teachers. ActionAid has a legitimate and necessary role to play in building the capacity of government to provide, and civil society to demand, better quality education services and outcomes. The organisation is also pulled into uncomfortable relationships of service provider or benefactor in communities and with civil society partners and coalitions. Quality education needs service delivery, capacity building and policy advocacy – but should ActionAid be doing all three? Does it have any other choice in the circumstances? At the moment ActionAid is very useful for civil society, using its power and influence to broaden participation and representation. The EFA coalition coordinator stated that: “*Civil society knocking on the doors of policy-makers would not go far if not for the credibility of ActionAid. We use ActionAid to open doors*”.

This is a very valuable contribution, but far from the vision ActionAid has for a sovereign state held to account by a

strong civil society. The relationships that ActionAid is currently in, or sustaining, need to be slowly and purposefully transformed. Madiana Samba highlighted some of the tensions in this process, and she considers there is a need for the slow, strong development of partners from the grassroots upwards. The education financing campaign, for example, is a national process which has grown out of the IMF work, the CEF-funded policy advocacy work in education, and the EFA coalition campaigning and analysis. It is a good fit with the agenda of many more partners in education and part of an internationally coordinated campaign. Madiana feels that, in order for the campaign to be valuable and effective nationally, she needs more time than international colleagues are giving to develop the foundations and strategy. The gaps in capacity, coordination and awareness for civil society organisations to meaningfully partner in this type of campaign need to be addressed before the campaign strategy can be constructed in a collaborative manner. It takes time for such a broad partnership to build consensus on key issues and strategies, and to increase capacity and funding to ensure that they are followed through properly.

A focus on slow and steady capacity and coalition building is also necessary to overcome another issue that threatens to undermine the effectiveness of policy advocacy work: that of coordination and linkage. ActionAid support many different types of groups and organisations at grassroots level, including: *Reflect* circles; violence against girls groups; mothers' clubs; and SMCs and school management associations. Within these clubs the relationship between livelihoods, education, gender and rights are probably pretty clear. If I am not comfortable about my daughter going to school because of the threat of sexual abuse and early pregnancy, it is not hard for me to see the link between gender, education and possibly even HIV. Yet, in large international organisations such as ActionAid, it is common for these types of development themes or issues to become compartmentalised. In ActionAid's office in Freetown, there is a women's rights coordinator, an education coordinator, an HIV coordinator, a governance coordinator – all working in the policy team. All of these colleagues, and all their peers in other organisations and institutions, need to be able to see the linkages between their different areas of work and capitalise on those to push coherently for policy change.

INGOs active in Sierra Leone are increasingly working together to make stronger cases on policy issues. The need to maintain and strengthen their own organisations' profile, and competition for resources, does get in the way of coordination and collaboration, but seems to do so less and less. The development partners meetings bring together INGOs and official donors with Ministry of Education officials to discuss priorities and coordinate their work on education. Partner coordination meetings were another attempt to communicate between all NGOs working on education, but these spaces have not been used effectively for a while. However, macroeconomic policy engagement is beyond issue-based mobilisation, and requires a higher level of integration – perhaps one that is more aligned to GCAP and budget advocacy work. Slow, painstaking work to develop the strength and ability of local groups, networked into

district and national alliances, would perhaps build integration from the bottom up and enable the kind of strong, legitimate and meaningful participation in macroeconomic policy choices that everyone wants to see. Mohammed Sillah, manager of ActionAid's district office in Kambia, told me that, in his experience, people's capacity to monitor their children's education and learning – and to engage in issues of governance – is much stronger where *Reflect* circles are active. Mothers who are learning literacy and analytical skills in these circles become much more interested in their children's education: they check their schoolbooks and even go to school to challenge the teacher if there is no evidence of work being done. He said that when people are involved in *Reflect* groups they work together as a team to manage community resources and keep their environment clean. But in communities where ActionAid builds schools and trains SMCs you do not see the same kind of commitment and responsibility. Mohammed firmly believes that this kind of process creates the foundations for building transparency and government accountability from the ground – and that will expose the contradictions between the needs of Sierra Leone and the requirements of the IMF.



Part three

Education rights from the cradle to the grave: campaign for a basic education fund in Brazil

By Iracema Nascimento, April 2009¹⁹

What is FUNDEB?

Demanded by society and promised during the electoral campaign of President Lula, who took office in 2003, FUNDEB is an accountable fund made up of resources contributed by state governments, the federal government and municipalities. FUNDEB funds maintenance and development initiatives in basic public education. It covers pre-school, primary, middle and high school education, and includes the education of youths and adults. FUNDEB came into effect on 1 January 2007 and will remain in force for 14 years. Today, its beneficiaries are some 48 million students in basic education.

The distribution of FUNDEB's resources is based on the number of students in primary public education, in accordance with the data from the most recent school census. Municipalities receive funding from FUNDEB based on the number of students in pre-school, primary and middle school education, while the states receive funds based on the number of students in primary, middle and high school education.

On 31 August 2005, a convoy of baby buggies was pushed up the ramp of the Brazilian national Congress and through the corridors of the legislative house, with mothers and their children brandishing rattles, cards and signs bearing the slogan 'The right to education begins in the cradle and is for life'. They were accompanied by representatives of the Brazilian Campaign for the Right to Education and other networks and organisations from the educational, trade union, business and women's rights sectors, in addition to deputies and senators from various political parties.

The group set up a clothesline in the main hall of the Congress, from which they hung painted nappies in a public demonstration that included shaking rattles and dancing *Ring-a-ring-a-roses* to advertise the demand for quality basic public education. This was the founding act of the *FUNDEB for real!* movement, led by the Brazilian Campaign for the Right to Education, which brought together diverse civil society institutions and associations committed to

public education. Since then, the movement has proven its value as a successful instrument of political pressure and popular control. Combining different strategies, the movement achieved significant victories in the preliminary analysis and creation of FUNDEB, a process that began in March 2004 and that ended in May 2007 with the approval of the law regulating the new fund.

In October 2007, in a solemn session at the Noble Hall of the Chamber of Deputies, the Brazilian Campaign for the Right to Education received the gold medal version of the Darcy Ribeiro prize, the most important award granted by the Brazilian Congress in the field of education,²⁰ in recognition of its work and political involvement in the process of creating, analysing and approving FUNDEB.

3.1 The Brazilian Campaign for the Right to Education

The Brazilian Campaign for the Right to Education was set up in 1999 as part of the preparatory process for the World Education Forum (Dakar 2000), to promote the right of quality public education for all. Today it is the broadest network in the field of basic education in Brazil, with 200 members from trade unions, NGOs and other networks. The Campaign is a member of the steering committee of the GCE, hosted the 3rd GCE World Assembly in 2008 and founded the Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education.

To achieve the right to quality public education for all, the Campaign has been engaged in several advocacy processes, demanding:

- appropriate public financing
- popular control and participation in all the processes and spheres of the educational system
- recognition of the value of educational workers, with salaries commensurate with the responsibilities of the profession and appropriate initial and ongoing training.

ActionAid Brazil is one of the founders of the Brazilian Campaign and has been a member of its steering committee since it started in 1999.

"When we set up in Brazil, one of ActionAid's first initiatives was to create partnerships with local and national organisations, since our experience in other countries had shown that, strategically speaking, local changes would only have far-reaching and long-lasting impacts if there was constant pressure at national level for these local changes to be transformed into public policies."

Glauce Arzua, Communications Coordinator, ActionAid Brazil

¹⁹This is a summary of the full paper.

²⁰Granted by the Commission for Education and Culture of the Chamber of Deputies in the name of the Brazilian Congress, the Darcy Ribeiro Prize was instituted by Resolution 30 of 12 August 1998 and was awarded for the first time in the year 2000.

When the Campaign coalition first started, it was held together under the slogan Quality Education for All. Glauce Arzua explained how ActionAid supported a process to refine this goal: *“The slogan ‘Quality Education for All’ is not something that causes disagreement or opposition; everyone supports it. But when we turn to the question of ‘how’ to achieve this aim, we run into obstacles. The challenge was to transform the networks into campaigns in the true sense.”* The Campaign opted to work on *funding* – an unexplored theme in Brazilian education at that time – initially focusing on the national education plan, to overturn vetoes that blocked the government’s commitment to raise the investment in education to a minimum of 7% of GDP.

“When the decision was made to choose funding as a focal issue in the context of the national education plan, the Campaign’s work shifted much closer to what ActionAid wanted, which was to influence public policies. A small change in public policy can generate a large impact, which is why ActionAid believes this type of intervention essential. It is very important to discuss the educational situation, to produce a diagnosis, to campaign, to raise public awareness, and so on, but what ultimately is all this for? To influence public policies.”

Alexander Arrais

Education lead, ActionAid Brazil

3.2 FUNDEB for real! campaign

The Brazilian Campaign for the Right to Education decided to influence FUNDEB from the moment discussions started on its creation, in 2004, at the Ministry of Education. The Campaign’s work on the creation of FUNDEB involved three phases from March 2004 to May 2007:

- the debate on the proposal before the executive authorities
- the influence exerted on the review process for the proposal for constitutional amendment which created the fund
- participation in the review process of the provisional measure regulating the fund.

During this period, the actions of the Campaign and other actors did not achieve their desired effects in relation to the proposal for creating FUNDEB. However, there were some important victories for organised civil society. One of these was the Ministry of Education’s setting up, in June 2004, of the Mediation Group, proposed by the Campaign at a meeting with the education minister in March of the same year. The objective was to help strengthen the processes of participation and popular control, with a view to enhancing civil society’s influence over public policy. The group was made up of four representatives from the ministry and four from the Campaign.

Review and approval of the constitutional amendment: June 2005 – December 2006

The one-and-a-half-year period required to review and approve the constitutional amendment that instituted FUNDEB involved

The Lula government and dialogue with civil society

The Lula government and dialogue with civil society
One of the priorities claimed by the Lula government is cultivating a close relationship with civil society. Nevertheless the government is a multi-faceted sphere and although part of the government is open to debating social issues with civil society groups, the effective locus of decision-making – the financial area of the government – has no interest at all in dialogue with civil society, preferring instead to prioritise its relationships with national and international financial institutions, with the aim of maintaining an orthodox economic policy. The financial area has the real power within the national government and it is this area that determines the government’s actions inside parliament. In summary, the space for civil society to exert some influence on the government is fairly restricted, even with Lula in power.

The Brazilian campaign’s dialogue with the ministry improved significantly from the beginning of the Lula government, even to the extent of influencing a few of the ministry’s positions and actions – for example: the ministry formally recognised the federal government’s failure to comply with the FUNDEF law and accepted the campaign’s proposal for the creation of working groups to discuss FUNDEB and the National Education Conference. However at the start of the Lula government (though this changed a short while later), the Ministry of Education was extremely weak, lacking any political weight within government and, despite the dialogue with civil society, the opinion of the finance ministry always prevailed.

a long legislative process, which forced the Brazilian Campaign for the Right to Education to engage in extensive and intensive work of monitoring and pressurising the parliamentary representatives, as well as enormous efforts to create and sustain the *FUNDEB for real!* movement, addressing the national political context of the general elections. Internally, there were changes in the general coordination team of the Campaign itself, as well as crises in the funding of the network.

During this period, the FUNDEB for real! movement, coordinated by the Brazilian Campaign for the Right to Education, carried out four public actions in Brasilia, hosted various public audiences at the Brazilian Congress, organised 11 initiatives to exert direct pressure on parliamentary representatives (particularly during the meetings of the commissions and voting sessions of the plenary assembly), sent out a wide range of correspondence to deputies and senators, and published public opinion statistics. All these initiatives were communicated to the Campaign network, the movement and the media, and involved careful and tireless political coordination, which, in turn, required innumerable phone calls, emails and meetings.

In relation to the review process for the FUNDEB proposal, the movement succeeded in getting several of its demands included in the text of the constitutional amendment. The first and biggest victory was the inclusion of nurseries. Other points included mention of the Initial Quality Student Cost (CAQ), which is the minimum amount to be invested per student, and the 10% contribution by the federal government.

Regulation of the amendment: December 2006 – June 2007

Following approval of the constitutional amendment, a regulatory law needed to be passed. This determined how the Fund was going to function, how the money would be distributed and what popular control mechanisms would be implemented.

During this phase, the movement's main task was to avoid setbacks to the victories obtained in the constitutional amendment. With limited financial resources and facing a parliament with a re-election rate of over 50%, the Campaign created an innovative methodology of legislative involvement. It organised the creation of a list of amendments to the text of the bill and drafted a technical report with an analysis of the 231 proposals for the project made by deputies and senators. The texts were easy to read and well argued, and supported the decisions of the parliamentary representatives. As a result, the *FUNDEB for real!* movement saw almost all of its proposals approved in regulatory law. This methodology, combined with other strategies developed by the Campaign, guaranteed an unprecedented victory for the *FUNDEB for real!* movement: never had civil society exerted such practical influence over legislation.

3.3 The Campaign's action strategies

From the moment the FUNDEB proposal began to be discussed at the Ministry of Education in March 2004, the Brazilian Campaign for the Right to Education developed a series of strategies to influence the elaboration of the project. These included: institutional interaction, political pressure on the authorities, social mobilisation, communication, production of knowledge and the formation of social actors. A key differentiating factor in relation to other Brazilian educational social movements was the decision not to create a global opposition between civil society and the state.

From the moment the FUNDEB proposal was presented by the federal government, the movement analysed the text, formulating criticisms and strategies of involvement without presenting global proposals for replacing the project with another, as was traditional. Instead, it looked to address key aspects of the text, such as: the exclusion of crèches from the original proposal; the institution of a contribution to the fund from the federal government; the establishment of a national minimum wage for education professionals; and the inclusion of a standard of quality. On all these points, it achieved significant victories.

The relationship with the public authorities was supported and legitimised by innovative mobilisation actions (such as the delivery of footballs to parliamentary representatives during the World Cup bearing the inscription *FUNDEB now – score a goal for education*). These actions were designed to involve a mixture of communicative political intentionality, a high degree of technical knowledge, humour and popular art, inspiring a desire to participate in and belong to the movement and to expand, through communicators, the possibility of opening up spaces in the media.

At the same time, the Campaign was tireless in exerting pressure on the authorities and carefully monitoring every step taken by the legislature and executive authorities in relation to the fund. On these points, it displayed considerable energy and perspicacity in producing and sending out cards, public opinion statistics, official letters and other documents, particularly targeting deputies and senators, as well as carrying out virtual pressure activities at critical moments – for example, sending messages that jammed the Congress's email system. Such innovative social mobilisation and critical, purposeful advocacy resulted in public commitments on the part of parliamentary representatives.

One of the highlights of these strategies was the ability to unite different social actors with distinct interests around the same cause, though not, of course, without some tensions and conflicts. The Campaign took a three-pronged approach:

Institutional interaction – enlarging the wheel: Believing in the potential for cooperation between multiple actors to achieve common objectives, and keen to involve other sectors of society in the debate and mobilise them on the FUNDEB issue, the Campaign adopted the institutional interaction strategy principally from the legislative review process of the project. Reinforced by the range of other strategies, it was the cooperation initiatives that undoubtedly gave shape to the *FUNDEB for real!* movement.

Political pressure on the authorities – critical and purposeful attitude: The Campaign believes that political pressure should be exerted in an autonomous manner, independent of party affiliations, and in a critical and collaborative spirit. Initially, it focused on the federal executive, principally the ministry of education during the period when the proposal for the creation of FUNDEB was being discussed. Subsequently, its attention turned to the Treasury, the centre of the government's decision-making process, and to the President of the republic himself.

Social mobilisation – making the wheel turn: This central strategy of the Campaign guarantees the social basis of its actions, highlighting both the presence and active participation of political figures. This was intended to demonstrate the public power of the network of actors united around the FUNDEB for real! movement, and its symbolic power to attract new actors and media attention. The actions involved in this strategy were concentrated during the legislative review process for FUNDEB and were conceived as a mixture of communicative political intentionality, humour and popular art, which resulted in public actions and innovative mobilisation tools.

Popular art and irreverence in the mobilisations

The use of humour and popular art, as well as innovative mobilisation tools, was an important part of the *FUNDEB for real!* movement, especially during the public actions in parliament. Instead of holding traditional public demonstrations with leaders and activists addressing the public through microphones, we tried to add some elements of popular art and culture, producing highly innovative and attractive demonstrations.

For example, when the *FUNDEB for real!* movement was launched in parliament on 31 August 2005, we covered the ramp to parliament's main entrance with a huge orange cloth showing a map of Brazil and the words *FUNDEB for real!* Children and activists sat on the cloth to pose for photographs; we also stood around the cloth and shouting slogans with our demands for FUNDEB.

The effect was very different from the usual speakers addressing crowds with microphones, something that happens almost every day outside parliament and largely fails to attract much attention. On the same day, lots of mothers with baby buggies (either with dolls or their own babies in them) entered parliament to show that society was aware of what was going on with FUNDEB. This was probably the first time that mothers with babies and buggies stepped into the national Congress, an event that drew lots of attention from the media and parliamentarians.

In June 2006, the FUNDEB bill was stuck in the Senate and things were very slow in parliament due to the World Cup in Germany and the forthcoming general elections. Taking advantage of the World Cup climate, the Brazilian Campaign organised the *FUNDEB now – score a goal for education* action, when renowned athletes handed footballs bearing this slogan to senators, along with a letter containing our demands for FUNDEB. The action also attracted the media and two weeks later the bill was approved by the Senate and was sent back to the House of Representatives, following the usual procedure.

Communication: belonging and visibility

With the aim of setting out the agenda for public debate and informing the public of the demands of the *FUNDEB for real!* movement, communications were organised along two lines: internal communications, to motivate the Campaign network and the *FUNDEB for real!* movement; and external communications, to ensure public visibility for the activities of organised civil society in relation to FUNDEB. This two-pronged approach led to a rapid pace of monitoring and publishing information on all the steps of each phase. The swift provision of verified and technically consistent information to the *FUNDEB for real!* network helped to maintain the atmosphere of permanent mobilisation and the sense of belonging, and supported network members' arguments in regional and local debates on FUNDEB.

The Campaign became the main non-governmental source of information on FUNDEB and the texts produced for the

network were rapidly reproduced by numerous organisations. As part of this approach, we also produced alerts for the movement's network, texts of support and so on.

Production of knowledge: arguing with credibility

The Campaign believes it is necessary to produce and systematise knowledge that adds credibility to its own political work, ensuring that consistent technical arguments inform its initiatives to put pressure on the authorities and to promote social mobilisation, communication and the preparation of actors. To achieve this aim, in addition to the studies and publications already available in support of the initiatives, other materials were produced during the FUNDEB process – for example, both the CAQi (initial quality – student cost) study and the consultation on the quality of pre-school education based their arguments on the citation of standards of quality in the text of the new fund and on the inclusion of nurseries. The CAQ project was also used throughout the period to reinforce the argument that the principle of quality should serve as a reference point for the financing of education in Brazil.

In addition to the above-mentioned work, specific materials were developed for actions relating to FUNDEB, such as technical notes and analyses to support the actions of parliamentary representatives. These documents helped to convince congressional representatives, and helped speed up evaluations. They also provided credibility in the eyes of the parties involved, including institutional partners and the media. In the *FUNDEB for real!* movement, the production of knowledge supported the arguments for political action, putting the Campaign in the position of a social actor that did not simply identify problems and submit demands, but presented proposals that contributed to the construction of solutions.

Building the capacity of social actors

The Campaign has sought throughout its history to incorporate strategies for the inclusion of its activists in all its initiatives. In the case of the *FUNDEB for real!* movement, direct participation in the actions for putting pressure on authorities at both local and national levels created new social actors and deepened the experience of those who already had experience of political activism. Not only did people have the opportunity to visit Brasilia and participate at the Brazilian Congress, many activists also learned to debate on a dry subject like the financing of education. In October 2005, for example, the 70 activists who were in Brasilia to take part in the Campaign's general assembly discussed the amendments to FUNDEB due to be presented by the movement at a public hearing in Congress and to deliver the document containing the amendments into the hands of the parliamentary representatives.

Training was provided through meetings and discussions organised by the Campaign for the debate on FUNDEB and the action strategies to influence the creation of the new fund. Campaign activists throughout Brazil received and studied the texts and documents produced by the network.

3.4 Achievements and impacts

Two kinds of success were achieved by the *FUNDEB for real!* movement during the process of creating, reviewing and approving FUNDEB.

The first relates to the influencing of public policy on the funding of education, including:

- **inclusion of nurseries:** by law, education is guaranteed from the cradle; 13 million children from 0 to 3 months of age will have access to education
- **more resources from federal government,** which has committed to invest more than R\$5 billion (nearly US\$3 billion) per year in FUNDEB as of 2009
- **quality:** the FUNDEB law contains the bases for what is defined as a minimum standard of quality for basic education
- **valuing of professionals:** the FUNDEB law also stipulates that teachers have the right to a minimum national wage
- **social control:** various mechanisms were established for public monitoring and participation in the implementation of the fund.

In addition to the advances and victories already mentioned, we need to consider the secondary gains derived from the wide-scale mobilisation of civil society around FUNDEB. These are gains related to the development of social actors and the construction of a more complex vision of basic education and early child education. Vital Didonet of the Brazilian early childhood network (RNPI) highlights three points:

- **Moving beyond a partial vision of education:**
“Previously everything was focused on primary education because it was an obligatory stage. FUNDEB contributed to a conceptual shift in relation to basic education, reinforcing the idea of basic education as something that begins in the crèche and continues until the end of high school.”
- Some **organisations expanded their relationships by organising debates** on pre-school education in FUNDEB at their headquarters, at universities or in legislative assemblies. Both the World Organization for Early Childhood Education and the Inter-Forum Movement of Childhood Education in Brazil organised debates at various locations in Brazil, which publicised and gave prominence to the discussion of the issue.
- **People expanded their knowledge on funding and education for small children:** The issue of educational funding acquired greater importance for academics who participated in the movement. Many texts circulated and were studied. There was also a more informed discussion that framed the 0-3 age as a period of education rather than one of social assistance. The idea that “a small child only needs care and not education” is still entrenched, but it was important that this debate took place.

Maturity

“In my view the Campaign has attained a considerable level of maturity and capacity in terms of political and contextual analyses, mapping of strategic openings, and its cultivation of a sense of opportunity in relation to occupying spaces, making a difference, developing actions that have repercussions. I think the diversity of actors and experiences that were developed enabled this maturation. Comparing with other networks that we monitor, we have observed that it makes a big difference having a communications person or team as part of the Campaign’s general coordination team, responsible for keeping the website updated, producing newsletters, circulating knowledge and disseminating its ideas and the knowledge generated. Another of the Campaign’s insights is to ensure that this general coordination team works at a high level, that it has an excellent capacity for liaison and political analysis and that it is capable of activating and mobilising a collective at key moments.”

ActionAid Brazil representative

A coalition worth maintaining

“Our participation on the Campaign’s steering committee has continually provided an extremely rich learning experience for ActionAid Brazil, enabling a dialogue with entities more representative of the grassroots level of education. Our role was to ensure that the Campaign always acted to influence public policies. This, we believed, was the main new element brought by the Campaign in comparison to other forums and coalitions. ActionAid’s belief in the Campaign’s potential was been justified over the years. At the beginning, there were doubts about whether the Campaign would have a beginning, middle and end – in other words, whether it would have an expiry date. But the Campaign developed into a grand coalition of society with energy for different campaigns for influencing public policies. It isn’t an outdated campaign; it’s a coalition worth maintaining. This is what ActionAid has learned by working alongside the Campaign.”

ActionAid Brazil representative

3.5 Popular participation in education policy: lessons learnt

Social movements

- **Wider appeal:** From the start, it was realised that the movement needed a wider appeal/base in order to demonstrate that FUNDEB was not only of interest to sectors directly linked to the field of education, but to society as a whole. Daniel Cara, Coordinator for the Brazilian Campaign for Education explains: “It was a middle class movement, it involved NGOs traditionally concerned with the fight for rights, progressive business organisations, trade unions, social, popular, feminist, women’s and mothers’ movements, etc. It constituted a portrait of a progressive sector of Brazilian society and succeeded in influencing public opinion. This pluralistic composition facilitated mobilisation. Though the mothers who fought for the nurseries probably didn’t win over

public opinion, they did mobilise parliamentary representatives. The social spectrum of the movement was so pluralistic and so qualified that it had the capacity to mobilise public opinion.”

- **It is important to expand and diversify without diluting:** The quest to diversify the movement and galvanise different actors around the FUNDEB programme brought the challenge of ensuring that this expansion did not lead to a loss of focus. As Denise Carreira, teacher at the Faculty of Education, University of Sao Paulo, observed: *“It was necessary to enlarge the wheel based on the agenda of the proposals, otherwise we would run the risk of losing our identity and focus, over-diluting and reducing the radicalism of the agenda.”*
- **The role of art and symbolic action as galvanising agents:** In the FUNDEB for real! movement, the mobilisations combined irreverence and popular art in political action. Children’s dances, mass rattle shaking, baby buggy convoys, washing lines hung with painted diapers, symbols linked to the universe of football, among others, took over the Brazilian Congress. This attracted and maintained actors and also gained the attention of parliamentary representatives and the media. Denise Carreira explains: *“We used symbolic action as an important dimension of political work, as a galvanising element, not just a communicative one. In any public act we made an effort to have texts and proposals associated with symbols as a means of communicating and galvanising people around certain agendas. The Ring-a-ring-a-roses dance, for example, signified cooperation; the babies signified what was excluded in a very concrete way.”*
- **How to keep a heterogeneous group united and mobilised:** Throughout the three and a half years of the debate around FUNDEB, and more specifically during the time when the FUNDEB for real! movement was active (June 2005 – May 2007), it was important to:
 - sustain a long-term agenda, with time limits and well-defined objectives at each stage of the review process of the proposal. *“The rhythm of Congress requires that you develop strategies step by small step; you have to be aware that the path is long, but think of every step in intermediate stages and celebrate each step taken, each victory. This sustains the energy of those involved in the process.”* (Denise Carreira)
 - **sustain the network with quality information:** the ongoing circulation of information between the elements of the movement was fundamental, above all for the so-called ‘network heads’ or contact people who coordinated the FUNDEB for real! movement with other groups, organisations and movements – it was this circulation of quality information that helped maintain the link between the movement’s members
 - **value the contribution and role of each actor:** *“If you over-centralise or draw attention only to whoever is in the driving seat, it causes jealousy and disillusionment. The effort to value, acknowledge and give visibility to the different participants is hard, but it nurtures a relationship of trust, which is one of the*

main challenges of working in politics. It is important to remain attentive to the disagreements that are a natural feature of a process like this and to foster dialogue before the situation turns into a crisis.” (Denise Carreira).

Working with Congress

- **Supra-party action:** The movement formulated its strategies independently of the party in power, its origin or its campaign promises and soon discovered that it had allies and adversaries in all the parties. On the one hand, parliamentary representatives with a history of supporting social movements often prioritised, in their actions, their commitment to the decisions of local or federal government, which did not always reflect the interests of the population. On the other hand, parliamentary representatives who for party-political reasons were opposed to the movement’s agenda ended up supporting the ideas of the FUNDEB for real! movement as a result of its record.

“It is important to identify your allies, without prejudice. We can be surprised or disappointed. The legislative process is dynamic and does not operate only according to party logic. It has spaces and breaches that can be occupied.”

Denise Carreira

“It is understandable that people relate more to parliamentarians more closely identified with the interests of civil society, but we relate to all parliamentary representatives, considering them to be representatives of the Brazilian people, and not of this or that group.”

Daniel Cara

- **Constant mapping of the forces at play:** The very particular dynamics of Congress demand constant reinterpretation of political moment and immediate action – for example, it is important to occupy spaces in the disputes between the party in power and the opposition.

“When the federal government filled the legislative sphere with MPs, we released public statistics that were used by the opposition to criticise the government. When the opposition blocked the agenda of Congress in the name of interests with less legitimacy than the educational agenda, we also published statistics; we applied pressure via the media. This influenced the speeches of the parliamentary representatives. In the process, we supported public debate and used it in our favour. Inevitably our statistics were used by both sides in accordance with the atmosphere in the Congress. In this game, it is important to have a very clear political line in relation to your principles.”

Daniel Cara

- Understanding the nature of parliamentary work: Daniel Cara explains the Campaign’s approach: *“We learnt how to work with parliamentarians by understanding the*

nature of their interests. Parliamentary representatives need agendas and they need to appear in Congress in the public eye. Very often members of Congress phoned to advise us that they were going to take this or that position and, through our arguments, we managed to persuade them to assume positions favourable to our movement. This was essentially based on the tacit argument that 'if you adopt such a decision, we will go to the people to say that we disagree'. This left them to decide which path to take: if they were going to support the government's proposals or our own."

Daniel explained that it also became apparent that parliamentarians are generalists, since it is difficult to specialise in particular subjects, given the sheer number of bills passing through the Congress. "The product that we delivered to Congress [texts of amendments of the movement and technical notes with analyses of other amendments] was similar to the kind of material produced by a parliamentary adviser, with a simple, informative, verifiable text, which enables the parliamentary representative to engage with the material. So, they received a reliable text from a movement with a social base. Consequently, some parliamentarians who were not necessarily on our side supported our amendments simply because they lacked any arguments to counter our proposals."

- **Sources supporting parliamentary activity:** In addition to the pressure on parliamentary representatives within the Brazilian Congress, the *FUNDEB for real!* movement sought to influence the social bases of deputies and senators at a local and regional level. Vital Didonet recalls: "In Congress, there are many bills being disputed and pressures from all sides, which makes parliamentary representatives less accessible to personal contact and less open to changing their minds. Hence, working with the base, eye-to-eye with the voters, is of fundamental importance. We sent material to the grassroots so that people could seek out their representatives and apply pressure on them, trying to converse and make demands." The Campaign also targeted the advisors of parliamentary representatives, as Denise Carrera explains: "Sometimes the parliamentary representative is not that au fait with a subject, but the adviser is and he ends up influencing the representative."
- **Precise technical arguments on specific points:** Since federal government's presentation of the first project, the *FUNDEB for real!* movement analysed the text, formulated criticisms and strategies, but never presented a proposal to replace the text in its entirety. The suggestions were specific and well founded, as Daniel Cara points out: "For the first time in the field of education in Brazil, organised civil society did not produce parallel texts, as it did with the federal constitution, the law of directives and bases of education and the national education plan. We followed another path, which was to influence the proposal during the review process, and I believe that by taking this path the victories were greater than in previous experiences."

- **Attention to terms and the nature of analysis at each stage of the process:** Monitoring and engaging with the review process of a law bill in a legislative chamber requires understanding of political time, which demands real orchestration of the time of the internal debate within the movement and of the action in relation to events and legislative procedures. An exceeded term can lead to a victory being overturned.
- **Attention to the subtleties of law:** All texts – whether commission reports, amendments to debates in the plenary assembly or any other material – need to be rigorously examined. The movement found itself in situations where it was celebrating significant changes in its favour in the text of a law, while simultaneously finding itself obliged to fight for the exclusion or inclusion of just one term in the text that would have a huge impact on the right to education. In other words, small editing changes can result in enormous changes to a project.

Relationship with the media

- **You cannot ignore the major media outlets:** The relationship with the media is fundamental for any social mobilisation. The different media (TV, radio, internet, newspapers) bring the educational agenda, actions and positions of the *FUNDEB for real!* movement to the population as a whole. Although Coverage was not always favourable or even impartial, it was important to gain space in the media. The large circulation newspapers are particularly important in terms of initiatives for applying pressure on government authorities, as they have major repercussions in the political world. In general, the media proved favourable to *FUNDEB*. Editorials, notes and news updates reminded the reader that the Fund was in the review process and that voting on it was behind schedule. The movement forwarded these articles by fax to the parliamentary representatives.
- **Become qualified as a reliable source:** Regardless of their sympathies to a cause, journalists need reliable sources that can promptly provide solid technical arguments or a clear demonstration of political power. This was how the movement positioned itself as a source for the media. Very often articles were published without specific reference to the movement, but bearing its stamp and coming out of informal conversations with journalists. Daniel Cara explains:

"In Brazil, people are used to treating the press like corporations of interests related exclusively to the middle class. This is true in part, but the press also want news and quality information above all else. The conservative sectors of the field of education lack the capacity to produce news every day, just like ourselves. At the time of FUNDEB, we managed to establish ourselves as an actor, producing news at least twice a week. It became obligatory for anyone discussing FUNDEB to interview the Campaign."

- **Mapping resources and journalists and acting within the network:** *“It is important to map the more receptive journalists, providing them with information, analyses and public statistics that explain the tensions. Working in a network was fundamental: what we managed to achieve with the media was the result of operating in a network, placing the communication structures of organisations at the service of the movement. Certain advisers have greater access to certain press departments.”*

Denise Carreira

3.6 Conclusions, perspectives and pathways

At the start of 2004, the directorate of the Brazilian Campaign for the Right to Education had doubts about whether or not it should prioritise the FUNDEB agenda. In October 2007, the Campaign received the Darcy Ribeiro award from Congress for its involvement in the creation of the fund. Perhaps one of the greatest lessons learnt from this chapter in the Campaign’s history is that you should not enter a process only when the bill is presented in the kind of ideal state found in our dreams.

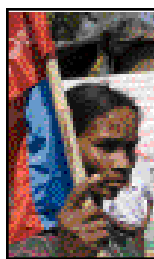
Despite many setbacks, and in a context in which the government was seeking to block any mention of minimum standards for education, Denise Carreira stresses that: *“A major victory was identifying an opportunity to focus on the question of quality standards, as something more daring than FUNDEB could be. FUNDEB was not our dream, but on the way we could present our proposal for CAQi to a wide range of people, getting many people who had never even heard of the proposal to talk about the subject.”*

Without doubt, participation in the FUNDEB process, combined with all the other initiatives already undertaken, has consolidated the Campaign as a political actor of high renown, legitimacy and leadership in the educational field in Brazil. And with its involvement in the process of creating and reviewing FUNDEB now concluded, the Campaign faces the enormous challenge and responsibility of administering the political capital that it has accumulated, of keeping its network alive and active in relation to Brazilian Congress and the executive without the resources to do so and in a context in which bills do not always mobilise people as much as FUNDEB did.

“The more you develop a relationship, the more you are recognised, the more you recognise the other as an interlocutor and the more you sit down at the table to negotiate. The deeper your relationship with a struggle within the institutional-political system, the deeper your relationships within this system, the more you have to understand the rules of the game of this system. And you need to take greater responsibility in relation to your positions.”

Daniel Cara

In the wake of FUNDEB, the Campaign has been dedicating itself to many other political projects. In October 2009, it celebrates 10 years of existence: a crucial and exciting moment for assessing the paths travelled thus far and deciding on the paths that remain ahead.



Part four A leap from Dalit movement to land rights movement in Nepal

By Basu Dev Kafle, Hem Raj Dhakal and Nar P Limbu,
March 2009

“The voices of the voiceless are being heard, thanks to the momentum created by the Reflect movement.”

Ram and Bhandari

Legally banned but socially practiced caste-based discrimination, coupled with virtually no access to land and its products, has set the background for the movement of the depressed and oppressed – or the Dalit movement. This extract from interviews with the movement’s leader, Baldev Ram, and other members shows how ActionAid’s *Reflect* approach helped to ignite and propel the wider movement for change.

From oppressed to leader

“We very much realised the need to have unity and unified action among Dalits as there were caste-based hierarchical differences and discriminations even among ourselves. In my mind, I frequently questioned why there was such discrimination among ourselves and what could cause us to unite in a unified movement against the age-old oppression, discrimination and lack of access to land and other natural resources.

“My suffering from discrimination, exploitation and landlessness were great lessons for me that I learnt silently first. This later on took an aggressive form, stirred and ignited by Action Aid’s work on Reflect circles that provided a forum to raise issues like Dalit unity, a discrimination-free Dalit society, Dalit rights and many other issues guided from the perspective of rights-based approach. ActionAid’s Reflect movement greatly helped us to move away from a state of inaction to action.

“My village was chosen by Action Aid Nepal to have a Reflect centre which worked as a catalytic agent by raising contemporary issues and motivating the concerned people to internalise them by being responsive toward the change. At the Reflect centre participants could freely speak out about their problems, critically analyse them and work together to address them with the active support of the facilitators who were more like activists than mere facilitators. The centre thus provided a forum where different themes of topical importance were raised, discussed and analysed from different perspectives to sensitise, motivate, organise and finally drive the participants to take initiative to respond to the issues/problems of wider critical concern.

“One day as I was passing through the centre, I heard participants taking part in a heated discussion about the issue of untouchability in the village. The issue was, however not peculiar to our village: it was already a national issue, which was legally banned but socially practiced. Participants also expressed a deepening concern regarding internal discrimination among Dalits and the socially obligatory practice of disposing the dead animals. Discussion centred on organising a body under the leadership of a mature person from within so that he/she could play an activist’s role to launch the movement against this discriminatory practice. I was called in and offered to head the group in order to fight for our rights and not be obliged to lift dead animals from the landlords’ homes against our own interest under forced social pressure. We, the organised group, started to refuse the order of the landlord to lift dead animals in our village – this later spread to other villages and beyond. It raised a hue and cry among the landlords who started blocking our movements by virtually putting an embargo upon us, our locality and our movement. The human rights activists and media persons were drawn to our issue and supported us. Even the local administration threatened us if we failed to resume our traditional practice of disposing of dead animals from the homes of landlords. Despite the painful situation – embargo, threats and boycotts that prevented us from all other social, cultural and religious practices – we did not succumb to such undue pressure tactics.

“The Reflect centre taught us a lesson that the fight should be on to finish these ills; it also supported us throughout the move. It taught us the process, the steps to take and the persuasive tactics to drive the movement towards its successful conclusion. We also learnt from Reflect that any movement, big or small, is a process-based action that has to move through a myriad of twists and turns to get the desired result. Information sharing, networking, feedback, discussion and analysis of the issue, critical and reflective thinking, strategising future courses of action based on the review of present movement, regular communication and interaction among the group/organisational members, recording the resolutions/decisions of meetings and communicating/disseminating them among members, practicing how to put one’s thoughts and ideas before others, debating and advocating are such processes the Reflect centre taught us. We virtually internalised these critical aspects to drive and direct the movement toward the meaningful end.”

Facilitating change through personal actions

“A movement should be meaningful and value-based in order to accomplish the goal of social transformation.”

Prem Kumari Chaudhari, 27, from Siraha

Prem recounts an incident which she calls a *small revolt* related to Dalit movement. Working as a *Reflect* facilitator in Basajodi of Siraha district and running the *Reflect* centre at night, men looked down upon her, suspicious of the value of *Reflect* classes for adults. While she was running the centre, her father arranged her marriage, which she did not oppose.

She decided to invite all the participants of the *Reflect* centre and distributed them invitation cards. As the *Reflect* participants were all Dalits, she prepared herself to face the situation if something unpleasant propped up. She talked with all the participants and mentally prepared them to be at the wedding home and accept the situation as it may come. She requested them to be at the site of wedding, not just outside the site as was the convention. All the *Reflect* participants visited the bride at the site of wedding and touched and washed her feet as per the religious practice.

“No Dalit ever dared to do so before, for they were forbidden to touch the bride or bridegroom because of their untouchability. It was quite an unexpected event for the non-Dalits – they looked at each other but could not dare to stop the participants from personally touching me. The day proved to be a historic day as it ended the age-old religious discrimination.

“During the training for Reflect facilitators we were provided with an opportunity to look at things critically, analyse and reflect them and assess strategies that would help address the issues/problems raised in the discussion. This was an eye-opening experience for me, which I wanted to transfer to the Reflect participants. I did that successfully, yet being extremely careful. Careful analysis of the issue from multiple perspectives in a sequential manner by visualising its course of action was what I want to term as the technique that helped me develop my confidence. Confidence, care and clarity of action to be taken are the intertwined ingredients for any issue to be addressed well and Reflect training helped me equip myself with such tools and techniques. Also, the prevailing situation was so rife with discriminatory practice that anybody with an insight into the situation and knowledge of the techniques to raise and address the issues could be as bold and unconventional as myself.”

4.1 Transformation of the Dalit movement

The Dalit movement sparked by the move to refuse the disposal of dead animals from the landlords’ premises took a wider perspective and escalated from local to regional to national level given the commitment of Dalit activists such as Baldev Ram and Som Bhandari. Mr Ram’s accession to chairman of the National Land Rights Forum (NLRFF) and consequently his inclusion on the government’s high-level land commission as a representative of the entire landless people, is the outcome of his undaunted commitment and tireless struggle against the tyranny of the socioeconomic political system. *“Had I not been elected leader of the group formed in my village at the Reflect centre and without the confidence I developed through several discourses made at the centre, I would perhaps have not been where I am today,”* he admits frankly.

“One of the characteristic features of the movement was the involvement and active participation of Dalit women, which was mainly spurred by their intensive involvement in Reflect

centres. As women in the Terai are mostly house-bound – and even more so in Dalit families – bringing them away from home out into Reflect circles was an achievement in itself.”

Mr Ram, who is still tilling the land of four landlords as a tenant, was actually influenced by his fellow worker, Som Bhandari, who is now general secretary of the NLRF. Mr Bhandari was a landless tenant tilling the land of the landlord in his village without any tenancy rights for many decades. “Originally, the land rights movement stemmed from the fight to secure tenancy rights as the land tillers and tenants were excluded from these rights,” remarked Bhandari. “The movement toward securing tenancy rights was gradually replaced by the movement for land rights.” Mr Bhandari went to Siraha to support for the cause raised by Baldev Ram after the successful and widely acclaimed launch of the Dalit movement. There was great similarity between the movements – the Dalit movement fought a case of social exclusion and the land rights movement fought against the social exclusion of poor tenants and landless farmers. Because of this, Mr Bhandari soon found a berth in the movement led by Baldev Ram, and the duo now assume key responsibilities in the national land rights movement.

Mr Bhandari explains: “We started a cooperative 15 years back in the village, six of nine wards where the tenants tilled the land of the landlords. We sought help from ActionAid Nepal to give impetus to our movement. ActionAid helped us by doing a land ownership survey, revealing that large majority of people in the village were poor tenants and landless farmers. In the Reflect centre, issues of land and tenancy rights were thoroughly discussed, motivating many people to realise their rights to land and further inspiring them to work together for an active land rights movement. The forum provided by Reflect centres (there were six at that time) was instrumental in making people aware of their rights and uniting them to work together for the land rights movement. The tenants were treated as free slaves by the landlords who never entertained their freedom as individuals full of dignity and respect. The awareness created by Reflect helped them to be further consolidated and active to stage a war against the tyranny of the landlords for an active land rights movement. The rights movement, be that for land or for social equity and inclusion – whether it originated from the north or the south of the country – had a point of convergence: broader human rights perspective. The movement – be that of farmers, women, Dalits, ex-kamaiyas or tenants – is to focus first on access to available opportunities or resources, based on a human rights framework within which the basic freedom of expression or organisation is exercised as a fundamental part of democracy to be enjoyed by all alike.”

4.2 The impact of *Reflect*

Mr Jagat Deuja, a *Reflect* practitioner and programme manager of Community Self-Reliance Centre made the impact and importance of *Reflect* to these movements very clear:

“The biggest contribution of Reflect is to help uncover the under-the-surface issues by bringing them up to the surface in order to sensitise people toward them and motivate them to take action to address them through collective effort. Reflect centres are therefore viewed as forums where issues and problems are analysed from multiple perspectives.

“The movement behind Reflect provides a strategic thrust to issues, prompting people to move away from a state of inactivity to a state of action in order to respond to the situational needs. The process it adopts – raising the issue; digging out the multiplicity of the issue; analysing it from all possible quarters of life; then drawing from this reflective discussion the strategies to be adopted to address the issue; solving the problem by understanding the underlying assumptions or principles and overall, developing reflective thinking practice – has an appeal to participants who are generally moved toward action to address the ailing situation or organisation.

“Another important contribution of Reflect is the role of facilitator who acts more like an activist by sensitising participants toward their rights and the potential they have to address the problem. The facilitator helps create a situation where participants identify themselves with it by relating their lived experiences. It is a movement of the movement as it helps set the scene for expected change. Facilitators’ background experience, their knowledge of the ground reality and their qualification and ability to deliver are equally important. Capacity building, networking organisations, documentation and sharing culture are the other procedural tenets of the Reflect movement to the generic movements.”

However, he warned that: “Reflect’s long-term support to the movement does slacken away as it stays there for certain period of time. The danger is also there when the facilitator impulsively becomes an over-active activist and participants tend to turn to him/her every time they are confronted with an issue or problem.”



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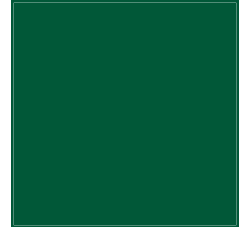
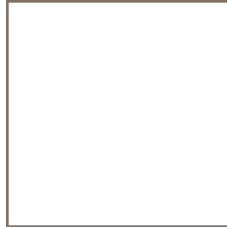
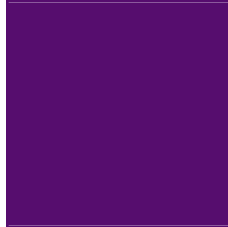
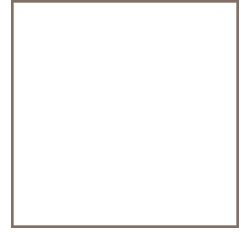
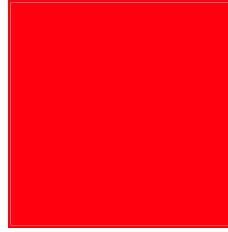
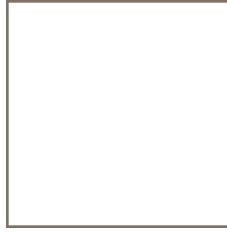
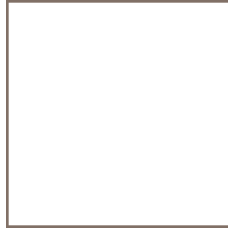
Front cover:

- Top row (L to R): ActionAid; Aubrey Wade/ActionAid
Second row (L to R): Jenny Matthews/ActionAid; Kari Collins/ActionAid; Emdadul Islam Bitu/ActionAid
Third row (L to R): ActionAid
Fourth row (L to R): Tom Pietrasik/ActionAid; Georgie Scott/ActionAid; Georgie Scott/ActionAid
Fifth row (L to R): Nicholas Axelrod/ActionAid; ActionAid; Georgie Scott/ActionAid
Sixth row (L to R): G.M.B.Akash/Panos/ActionAid; Nicholas Axelrod/ActionAid

- Page 2:** Jenny Matthews/ActionAid
Page 4: Kari Collins/ActionAid
Page 5: Emdadul Islam Bitu/ActionAid
Page 6: G.M.B.Akash/Panos/ActionAid
Page 9: ActionAid
Page 10: Tom Pietrasik/ActionAid
Page 13: Georgie Scott/ActionAid
Page 26: Sarah Elliott/ActionAid
Page 28: Georgie Scott/ActionAid
Page 36: Nicholas Axelrod/ActionAid
Page 37: ActionAid
Page 48: Petterik Wiggins/Panos Pictures/ActionAid
Page 52: Des Willie/ActionAid
Page 67: Aubrey Wade/ActionAid
Page 77: Tom Pietrasik/ActionAid

Back cover:

- Top row (L to R): Kari Collins/ActionAid; ActionAid
Second row (L to R): Tom Pietrasik/ActionAid; Aubrey Wade/ActionAid



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