

# YOUNG PEOPLE LEADING CHANGE



**ActionAid Bangladesh**

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**Design & Development**

Communications Team

ActionAid Bangladesh

# Foreword

## by the Chair



**Manzoor Hasan OBE**  
Chair  
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With the vision of ensuring a just, equitable and sustainable world, ActionAid International Bangladesh (AAIB) has been working in the country for more than three decades. Recognizing the innate worth of all people and the value of diversity, our prime goal is to strive for social justice and eradicate inequality. Since the beginning of our journey, we have been working in solidarity with the marginalized, the poorest and most excluded part of the population. Honesty, transparency and accountability at all level ensures effectiveness of our actions. Holding the courage of conviction, we remain free from any religious or party-political affiliation.

As women and young people represent most of the population of Bangladesh, As the countr is experiencing demographic dividend, AAIB believes that these young people are important innovators and drivers of change. Unfortunately they experience high levels of unemployment and marginalisation. For this, we will continue to invest in children and support their growth, skills and knowledge so they can become contributing citizens of the country.

After becoming an affiliate member of the AA Federation in 2014, AAIB has contributed to dual citizenship through taking leadership and delegation on climate justice and resilience and young people. Building on the key achievement from the CSP - IV, AAIB has shaped its Fifth Country Strategy Paper (2018-2022) with four strategic priority areas. The strategic shift from the Forth to Fifth CSP has focused on understanding rights, and development priorities in the time of significant global shifts causing major unrest. Role of private sector in social development is also one of the focus points of the new strategic priorities.

Creating additional governance responsibility of ensuring democratic and accountable practices, the AAIB Executive Board is committed to engage the excluded and marginalized communities across all programme in the light of human-rights based approach to co-create a world of dignity, freedom from poverty and all forms of oppression.

We hope, the support and cooperation from policymakers and other strategic allies that we have earned over the years, will continue in the new strategic journey. With the cooperation of communities we will be able to achieve the key priorities in the coming years.

# Preface



**Farah Kabir**  
Country Director  
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ActionAid International Bangladesh (AAIB) is entering its fifth strategy period from 2018 to 2022. After successfully ensuring key achievements from the last CSP, AAIB believes the new goals will strengthen the aspiration and confidence of the organisation to work for rights, justice and challenge discrimination of all forms which it has gained over more than three decades through playing pioneering role of advocacy on rights and social justice.

AAIB has come up with the new CSP considering the current changing scenarios externally and within AAI. In the new strategic framework four specific strategic priorities were identified in terms of inequality, gender based violence, climate change and resilience, local and global conflicts, and issues of displacement and migration impacting young people and women disproportionately.

The CSP V will continue the efforts of ensuring women rights and gender equity with its advocacy to implement feminist values of policies to combat injustice and inequality. In its fifth phase, AAIB will continue working with the frontline victim communities and institutions at all levels to fight the impacts of disasters and climate in partnership with women and young people. While advocating for climate justice at all level, with resilience at the core, and the effort to build on the unique women led humanitarian engagement will continue as well. AAIB also looks forward to continue its advocacy on tax power, redistributive justice and accountable and transparent public service and ensuring workers' rights. AAIB believes in youth leading changes and therefore in the new CSP addressing the need and demands of young people is one of the main focus.

ActionAid International Bangladesh aspires to continue its contribution in development, reducing poverty and ensuring social justice through following ActionAid International Strategy 2028 in its next CSP as well.

The shift from CSP IV to CSP V with successful steps in every programme has been made possible only because of the tremendous support from the communities, partner organisations, policymakers, frontline staff and senior management. While the Executive Board has been contributing in this thriving journey being the strategic think tank, the progress will continue holding the hand of the Board. and development partners from across the world.



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# Identity and Principles

## Vision

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

## Mission

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

## Values



### Mutual respect

requiring us to recognise the innate worth of all people and the value of diversity



### Equity and justice

requiring us to work to ensure equal opportunity for everyone, irrespective of race, age, gender, sexual orientation, HIV status, colour, class, economic status, religion, ethnicity, or disability



### Honesty and transparency

requiring us to be honest, transparent and accountable at all levels for the effectiveness of our actions, fairness of our judgements and open in our communications with all



### Solidarity with the poor

requiring us to be committed to fighting poverty, injustice and gender inequality



### Independence from any religious or political party affiliation

requiring us to be free from any religious or party-political affiliation



### Courage of conviction

requiring us to be creative, bold and innovative — without fear of failure — in pursuit of making a poverty free, just and equitable society



### Humility

requiring us to recognise that we are part of a wider alliance against poverty and injustice

## Our Approach

The primary goal of ActionAid is to strive for social justice whereby inequality is eradicated. Patriarchy is deeply entrenched in society and marginalises women across social spheres, depriving them of their rights and excluding them from services and governance processes. The widening economic inequality within the country, which further compounded by populist global trends, makes the poorest of the poor even poorer. Furthermore, the vulnerability of communities living in poverty and exclusion are intensified due to natural disasters and structural causes of violence. It will work for establishing Rights, Redistribution and Resilience.

AAIB has committed to applying a feminist lens and values in its work, which will guide its approach, interpreting and advancing intersecting inequalities. It addresses injustice and inequality caused by the power structures, both visible and invisible, in communities. To generate a broad community-wide understanding of the issue, AAIB will address the structural causes of injustice. Affirmative approaches AAIB believes, are required at all levels to reconcile inequalities, and address the structural causes of inequality arising from unequal power relations.



## People we work with

AAIB engages with a diverse audience consisting of the poorest and most excluded women, men, young people, children, sponsors, donors, state and non-state actors and institutions, media and related stakeholders. AAIB enters into long terms partnerships with communities, as well as local and national organisations.

AAIB prioritises the rights of women, and young people at the centre of all initiatives, programmes, plans and processes undertaken by it. As women bear the brunt of poverty, injustice and exclusion, they must play a vital role to shift unequal gender power relations, practices and stereotypes.

Young people represent majority of the population, yet they experience high levels of unemployment and marginalisation. They are important innovators and drivers of change. AAIB will continue to invest in children and support their growth, skills and knowledge so as to become contributing citizens of the country.



## How we work

The Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) defines our work, and is rooted in the four broad and interconnected pillars – empowerment, solidarity, campaigning, and alternatives. The success of these pillars are based on the following issues:

Fostering partnerships and alliances

Strategic engagement with governmental institutions and non-governmental stakeholders; Strategic engagement with media

Promoting alternatives through research and knowledge sharing.





# Strategy Development Process

## Methodology

Shifts in the global geopolitical landscape, and its impact on the development sector has had a major bearing on the identification and development of this strategy. The perspectives of national and international non-governmental organisations, the Sustainable Development Goals, 7th Five Year Plan and ActionAid International Strategy 2028 formed the base for the development of the Fifth Country Strategy Paper. AAIB's work experience in Bangladesh, achievements and competencies have also influenced the development of this document. We have assessed the needs of the poor and excluded populations, especially women, young people and minorities. The sector personnel have been consulted and contributed to the development of the country strategy as well.

Community perspectives from local rights programmes and projects

Non-Governmental Organisations and Civil Society representatives

Selected sector specialists from peer International Non-Governmental Organisations

Executive Board Members

## ActionAid International Priorities

ActionAid International Strategy 2028 established an overarching programme framework of the three pillars - Rights, Redistribution and Resilience. The programme priorities within this framework are as follows <sup>1</sup>

### Priority 1

Address the structural cause of violence against women and girls and secure women's economic justice

### Priority 2

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

### Priority 3

Strengthen resilient livelihoods and secure climate justice

### Priority 4

Advance transformative woman-led emergency preparedness, response and prevention



**The key  
organisational  
priorities that will  
make AA Federation  
more agile,  
cooperative and  
responsive are**

- Strategic Shift 1** | To be a more agile, unified and networked Federation
- Strategic Shift 2** | To build a culture of learning and quality M&E that generates knowledge,
- Strategic Shift 3** | To collectively prioritize securing resources from diverse sources aligned to our vision and values to meet strategic funding needs and build a culture of fundraising innovation
- Strategic Shift 4** | To embrace a culture of innovation and actively undertake digital transformation that revolutionize our ways of work through the Federation

## **Our Contribution to the Development Sector**

ActionAid Bangladesh (AAB) was established as ActionAid UK country programme in 1983. It has since grown to become a key contributor as an INGO in the movement fighting poverty and injustice. It's history of social development commencing from service delivery to the present pioneering role of advocacy on rights and social justice through movements and strategy alliances is appreciated by the communities, and other actors in Bangladesh.

In 2014 AAIB became an affiliate member of the AA Federation, post completion of the internationalisation. It has contributed to dual citizenship through taking leadership and delegation on climate justice, young people and education<sup>2</sup>. With a growing voice in the Federation, AAIB has an increasing level of autonomy that must be exercised responsibly and leveraged for the sustained growth.

Amongst the key achievements from the last CSP period are the support provided to Women Leadership in Emergencies, Democratic Budget Movement, promotion of Climate Resilient Sustainable Agriculture (CRSA), and Food Rights movements, Global networking for Disaster Risk Reduction, advocacy on Gender responsive public services, Safe Cities Campaign, and Anti-Child Marriage campaign, establishing the Water Museum, first of its kind in Bangladesh probably in Asia, campaign for Rights of the River and Water Democracy, increase engagement with “new development actors” focused on young people, and influenced legislative development and revisions nationally.

<sup>1</sup>In 2015, Bangladesh was appointed as the Co-Chair of the Education International Platform; Co-Chair of the Youth Working Group and held the Delegation on resilience and Climate Justice.



# Bangladesh

## – Evolution of Development Needs

Optimistic projections of Bangladesh's growth suggest Middle-Income status by 2021. This projection is based on the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita, whilst numerous queries on distribution and efficiency in utilisation of wealth for public services remains to be addressed. The increased inequality amongst the communities imposes a greater challenge toward striving for Social Justice.

### Transition from Least Developed Country to Lower Middle Income Status

A recent graduate into LMIC status, the transitioning Upper Middle Income Economies (UMIC) and Higher Income Economies (HIE) is contingent on social and political conditions for sustaining economic growth. Failure to sustain the momentum of this growth will expose the country to challenges of jobless growth aggravating income inequalities amongst the population. It is essential that we understand the developmental needs of the country, have knowledge of changes in the development and donor priorities in

the context of global shifts. The perceived shift in country status may also lead development partners to rethink their development priorities and accordingly divert resources elsewhere leaving behind the potential bearings on the poor along the pathways towards Middle-Income Country.

The current Government is making headway in social development across multiple sectors (i.e. maternal and child health, poverty reduction, availability of food, basic education, etc.). The media, especially social media, is becoming a stronger vehicle of delivering the voice of the people to the forefront of national concerns. Despite the achievements, gender equality, resilience and financing of public services still lags. Based on the SDG principle of "leave no one behind" the necessity to empower women and young people, especially those who are marginalised by structural factors such as social class, religion, gender, ethnicity, political belief and sexual preference, among others, is critical for transformation and to achieve SDGs. This empowerment process requires movements to raise awareness and mobilise the constituencies to recognise, fight for, and ultimately enjoy their rights.

**Changing demographic trends creating new opportunities and challenge:** With 34% of Bangladesh's population constituting young people<sup>3</sup> and over the next 20-30-year time period with falling fertility rates and high life expectancy rates will result in increased working age population. Based on recent studies only 47.6 %<sup>4</sup> of young people were employed and 62%<sup>5</sup> having not earned an income in the last year.

<sup>3</sup>Giving Youth a Voice (2012), BRAC IGS & UNDP

<sup>4</sup><http://www.ilo.org/ilostat>

<sup>5</sup>Next Generation Bangladesh: 2015 and Beyond (2016),

ActionAid Bangladesh, British Council and University of Liberal Arts of Bangladesh.

<sup>6</sup>Approximately 30 million

**Climate and economic induced displacement and migration** has led to increased populations residing in informal settlements in urban spaces across the country. The rising middle class<sup>6</sup>, shift between the role of the State and private sector, emergence of fundamentalism, rising inequality coupled with bulk corruption, unjust investment and trade regime are all key factors that will affect activities of the national and international non-governmental organisations sector.

**Digital transformation:** with over 100 million mobile phone users and 65 million internet users, Information communication and technology (ICT) adaptation is growing at a fast pace. Access to ICT provides opportunities to innovate, and put technology in the hands of communities.

## **Shifting donor priorities**

Civil society organisations (CSOs) are facing decreasing funds due to the shift in the global political environment which has influenced the priorities of all development partners. This situation has implications on the role of State and civil society. While the Government is cooperative on many levels, domestic laws regulating CSO operations including registration, reporting and accountability contribute to the shrinking space in which CSOs operate. Development partners are aware of these hurdles and are concerned about the future modes of engagement with NGOs particularly in relation to the sustainability of interventions.

## **Technological transformations**

with over 100 million mobile phone and 65 million internet users, Information communication and technology (ICT) adaptation is growing at a fast pace. Innovation and ICT adaptation are increasingly becoming the corner stones of organisational sustainability. ICT adaptation can be influenced through prioritisation of organisational needs. Innovation in terms of people, processes and efficiency can further augment organisational growth and sustainability. Inclusivity involves the responsiveness of civil society organisations to promoting the leadership of women and young people as well as developing strategic partnerships with a variety of stakeholders such as relevant government and private sector entities who share a common vision. With the decline in resources through traditional sponsorship engagement, use of digital technology provides avenues for increasing supporter base and actively mobilising resources.

## **Private Sector Engagement**

Over the recent years, private sector has been increasingly interested in, and contributed to social justice. A new focus of philanthropic foundations whereby they are poised to become strong partners in development. It is crucial that AAIB seeks new partnerships through engaging with progressive private sector.





## CSP-IV to CSP-V

The journey from the Forth to the Fifth CSP has been demanding given the significant global shifts and unrest. The strategy not only deepens our understanding but also increases the extent of perspectives in responding to external realities.

### Driving factors behind shifts

Over the past six years many development partners have prioritised and focused their efforts toward humanitarian crises (i.e. Syria). The increased partnership with the private sector and support of business development is an important factor for consideration for civil society organisations. With steadily declining revenue from child sponsorship the need to better understand development partner priorities has become crucial.

The graduation of AAIB to Affiliate member status within the AA Federation has accorded it with increased international visibility, greater degree of autonomy and a prominent voice. The introduction of the Executive Board has created the additional governance responsibility of ensuring democratic and accountable practices.

### Shifts in Strategic Priorities

In following a culture of honesty and transparency, we acknowledge the finiteness of resources, the work undertaken in sectors by other development partners which calls for an urgent reshaping of foci. We believe in working in sectors where we can have the most meaningful impact. AAIB is committed to engaging with the excluded and marginalised communities across all programme priorities. Whilst we note that there are many efforts redirected by government and development partners in the education sector, by focusing on education financing drives forward its advocacy and policy engagement in this sector.

### Shifts in Organisational Priorities

In continuing strong evidence based programming, new priorities that focus on the role of the private sector in social development, increased visibility and branding of the organisation via online and offline communication will be emphasised. Technology driven processes and solutions will be a driving force. Organisational sustainability, and its dimensions is key in fulfilling the mission.





মানসম্মত মেবা চাই  
বুঝারেনা মেবার  
জন্য উপযুক্ত  
যানবাহন চাই।

চাই   মানসম্মত  
গণমেবা

কর  
নাগরিক মেবা  
নিশ্চিত কর?

 এসপিইডি

নোটারী

# Strategic Priorities

Informed by the needs of the affected communities; AAI programme framework and priorities; shifts in development architecture and donor priorities, we have identified four strategic priority areas. In doing so, we acknowledge the instability in terms of climate change, local and global conflicts, and issues of displacement and migration.



## **Priority 1: Women Rights and Gender Equity**



## **Priority 2: Resilience and Climate Justice**



## **Priority 3: Right to Just and Democratic Governance**



## **Priority 4: Young People**



## Priority 1: Women Rights and Gender Equity

Women's empowerment is key to the social, cultural and economic freedom of all citizens. Our engagement focuses on empowering women to fight for their rights.

We will advocate for implementation of feminist policies to combat the injustice and inequality created by visible and invisible power structures in society. In doing so we will prioritise and address issues on reducing violence, increased safety and security in urban spaces, economic empowerment and unpaid care work.



## Core Areas





## Priority 2: Resilience and Climate Justice

We will continue working with the communities and institutions at all levels to build in partnership with women and young people who are already at the frontline of shocks and stresses caused by impacts of disasters and climate change. We will facilitate processes for climate justice and advocate for equitable, fair and just institutions to ensure greater accountability to the affected populations. We will seek to engage in strategic partnership with governments, institutions, private sectors and other stakeholders.

We will continue to build on the unique women led humanitarian engagement that enables communities to be better prepared, and respond in times of emergencies and conflict. We will also continue to design our humanitarian response in a manner that is transformational and contributes to building resilience of communities. While AAIB continues its efforts to reduce risk and build resilience at the rural areas, it will also expand to urban, semi urban and other peripheral areas.

### Core Areas

Building community resilience through defending commons, diversified and adaptive livelihoods and making institutions responsive and accountable in rural and urban spaces

Strengthen leadership of women and young people to lead humanitarian response, recovery and preparedness that contributes to resilience.

Facilitate social justice movements for environmental justice, including climate justice at all levels







### **Priority 3: Right to Just and Democratic Governance**

The country's state of progress and limitations in terms of financing, capacity across sectors has resulted in communities, especially those who are marginalised, being deprived of basic rights. Social justice has always been a challenge because of weak enforcement of legislations and policies, undue influence on the different organs of the state, low accountability and external influences over state and society.

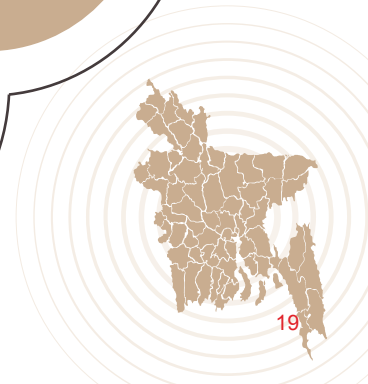
We seek to continue our advocacy and engagement with communities that enable the poor and excluded to advocate for their rights and have access to public services against the backdrop of shrinking and/or reduced space for civil society. In our engagement with government and its institutions, we seek to support increased capacity at all levels and influence the implementation of legislation. The investment in strategic engagement with the government at all levels facilitates the identification, and prioritisation of issues, and collaboration with development partners.

### **Core Areas**

**Tax power,  
redistributive  
Justice &  
accountable  
and transparent  
Public Services**

**Deepening  
democracy and  
civic space**

**Responsible  
business  
practices and  
ensuring  
workers' rights**





## Priority 4: Young People

With its extensive engagement with young people across communities, AAIB seeks to co-convene, facilitate and co-creator with local struggles and connect with progressive social movements, young people themselves and their movements. With increased emphasis on addressing the need and demands of young people supported by the 7th Five Year plan and Sustainable Development Goals, we will seek to address the causes of unemployment amongst young people and support their transitions through securing decent work.

The social, economic and political empowerment of young women and men is central to the engagement across all programme priorities. As such also connected are the issues of safety and security for young people in our programmes. With increased rise in fundamentalism, we seek to promote social cohesion and inclusion of the poor and excluded young women and men and minorities.

## Core Areas







# Organisational Priorities

## **Priority 1: Create an Evidence Base through Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, Learning, and Digital Transformation**

ICT-enabled solutions are prioritised and encouraged by the Government of Bangladesh ICT Act 2006, Perspective Plan of Bangladesh (2010-2021) and Strategy 2028. Digital transformation will enable continuous maintenance of an evidence base for our work through MEAL. It will also improve our internal processes and will allow us to work more efficiently for the community, and have a more visible presence in society.

### **Outcome Tracking**

The use of digital technology will create efficiency in monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning practices. We seek to promote the use of technology (mobile and web based applications) to support data collection, analysis and learning. Its use in programmes will increase AAIB's agility and responsiveness to partners and communities in which we work.

Having consulted our peers, AAIB during this strategy will increase visibility of its programme interventions by sharing lessons learnt and achievements with diverse stakeholders.

### **Process innovation and increased efficiency**

We will embrace the concept of digital transformation that will facilitate better performance and create an accountable organisation. A well-integrated Monitoring and Evaluation system that supports knowledge generation and dissemination, sector expert consultations and financial management will be areas which will be addressed.

## **Priority 2: Organisational Sustainability and Innovation**

We will seek to improve our organisation's sustainability through fostering a culture of innovation, collaboration, and partnership especially with progressive private sector.

### **Funding context and development priorities**

Strategy 2028 seeks to secure resource from diverse sources who are aligned with AA vision and values to meet strategic funding needs and build a culture of fundraising innovation. Being cognisant of external trends and donor priorities in Bangladesh, calls us have a renewed emphasis on value for money, adaptive programming and programme results. We will invest in seeking opportunities to expand on digital and offline resource mobilisation efforts to increase the funding reserve of the organisation.

### **Cross-cutting innovation and collaboration**

Through an integrated approach to programme delivery, AAIB will create a greater sense of solidarity amongst its workforce. We will develop and utilise tools to identify the skills and capabilities that will yield the highest growth potential which brings added value to our work. We will challenge invisible powers within the organisation and aim to achieve an equitable power structure within AAIB.

### **Private sector partnership**

With increased revenue being generated by private sector, it's important to establish partnerships with those progressive private sector institutions with whom we have a shared vision and common goals to advance the rights of the poor and excluded. AAIB will strive to build strong alliances, find synergies to address issues faced by civil society. We will engage with progressive private sector who adhere to the universal guiding principles on business and human rights as well as the UN Global Compact.

## **Priority 3: Shift in paradigm that implements Feminist Values and Leadership**

Since inception AAIB has held true to its identity as a feminist organisation. We will deepen feminist leadership in the organisation and ensure that leaders at all levels (AAIB and partners) can practise this form of leadership

We will take a firm stance to establish our feminist identity, and articulate its premise. We will focus on equitable, gendered growth policies. The principles of feminism and its requirement in the fight for social justice need to be communicated to the communities in which we work and our partners.

## **Priority 4: Institutional Governance and Board**

During the Fourth CSP, AAIB established an effective two-tier governance system, it ensured engagement not only of development professionals but also women leaders from its programmes in communities, young professionals and representatives from local non-governmental organisations. The Board and the General Assembly seeks to successfully engage with the programme by actively contributing to and engaging with the CSP. As a full member of AAI Federation, contribute towards dual citizenship responsibilities. The design and performance therefore of these structures are key to promote a well-functioning institutional governance mechanism.

The representative for young people in the General Assembly of AAIB was elected to the AAIB Board and subsequently to the AAI Executive Board in line with Youth Principles in the Federation where the change in approach and perspectives continue to be well recognised. Looking forward to the next five-year strategy, AAIB will continue to recognise and implement the strategic role of, and direction by the governing bodies in practice. And the Executive Board and the General Assembly will play a vital role in communicating externally the responsiveness of the organisation.

## Priority 5: Green Agenda 2022

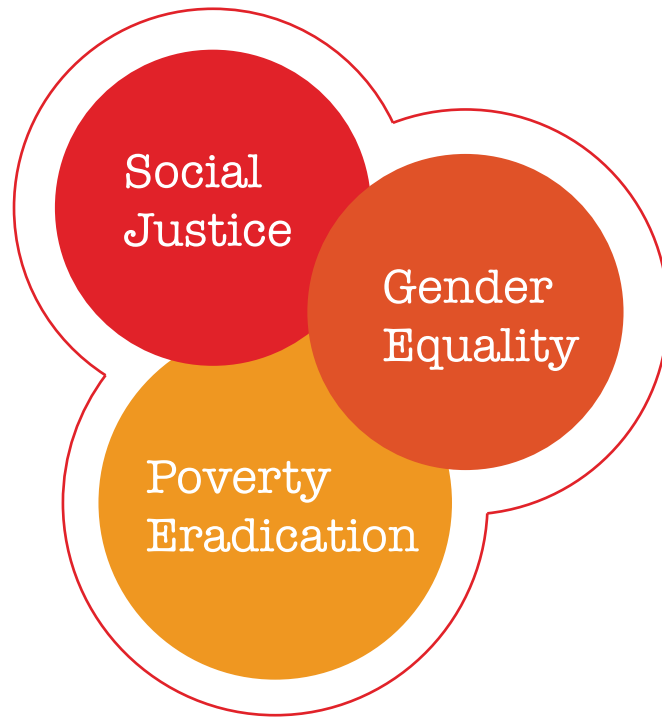
ActionAid realises that, mitigating Green House Gases (GHG) is imperative to reduce climate change impacts. Everyone must therefore act based on the common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities. The Green Action of the organisation commenced in 2010 with the '4R' approach (Refuse, Reduce, Reuse and Recycle). The organisation compensates annually by undertaking activities at community level that contribute towards greening the environment. Over the next five years, the organisation will:

- Continue calculating yearly CO2 emission and report to its stakeholders.
- Adopt the policy of 4 R principles within its operational modalities and hereby bring better efficiency in travel to the community and abroad. Support the LRPs to better use digital gadgets (online meetings). Monitor employees and partner's performance towards environment sustainability
- Further automation of the support functions, e.g. Admin, Finance, HR & ICT, M&E etc. so as to become a 'paperless' organisation
- It will work to promote environmental protection actions led by young people. It intends to invest in LRPs that reduces low carbon development and environmental protection.

## Priority 6: Financial efficiency and resilience

The finance team has established effective systems to improve financial management, accountability, planning, reporting and monitoring in the previous CSP period. The Finance unit will remain engaged to strengthen management policies and practices, professional integrity and management information system. Resource Management Framework to be followed to ensure the utilisation of the resources in a cost-effective way, ensure the accountability on utilization of the resources and donor compliance. Finance Unit will provide training on financial management for improvement of partners' understanding on financial policy and procedure, compliance, cost effectiveness and best utilisation of resources. The team will also seek to adopt AAI's Finance Transformation Project guidelines. It will work to take financial efficiency and management to the next higher level.







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