

## work of an NGO: introduction

This resource discusses the work of international NGOs and focuses on the organisation ActionAid. It covers parts of the KS3 and KS4 programmes of study for citizenship and the KS3 programmes of study for geography. The emphasis is on allowing students to develop an informed opinion, discuss the issue and have opportunities to take action.

### *What is an NGO?*

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are non-profit making organisations. There are many different types of NGO including development organisations (eg ActionAid), religious groups (eg Church of England), charities (eg Marie Curie), environmental agencies (eg Greenpeace) etc.

### *What is ActionAid?*

ActionAid is one of the UK's largest international development organisations, helping poor people in 35 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. ActionAid is committed to working for a world without poverty in which every person can exercise their right to a life of dignity. It aims to eradicate poverty by overcoming the injustice and inequity that cause it.

### *The rights-based approach to development*

In 1999, ActionAid launched a new strategy Fighting poverty together with the following goals:

#### *To help poor people exercise their basic rights*

Poor people are often denied their most basic rights of safe water, food, education, shelter, healthcare and a life of dignity. Many have little say in the decisions that affect their lives, so generation after generation is condemned to a life of poverty and uncertainty. By focusing on people's basic rights, ActionAid is able to take a long-term view of development.

#### *To work in partnership to achieve greater impact*

ActionAid ensures that a community's real needs are met by working in partnership with local organisations. These groups have a deep local knowledge and allow ActionAid to work more effectively in isolated villages and urban slums whilst strengthening the global anti-poverty movement.

#### *To promote change internationally*

ActionAid's advocacy work helps poor people make their voices heard by those who have the power to

change things. International campaign teams working on education, food and HIV/AIDS continue to lobby governments, corporations, the media and financial institutions so that they take account of the needs of poor people.

### *To improve gender equity*

Women bear the brunt of poverty throughout the world, especially in developing countries. Women and girls do not have the same status, power or access to and control over resources as men and boys. ActionAid recognises that inequalities between women and men are fundamental causes of poverty, and works for women and men to have equal status, especially within the areas of education and health.

### *What are ActionAid's priority areas of work?*

#### *HIV/ AIDS*

ActionAid believes that HIV/ AIDS is one of the biggest challenges facing the world today. ActionAid's international campaign is challenging rich countries and individuals to play their part in controlling the epidemic. ActionAid has also provided practical support to affected communities, trained counsellors and health educators, formed networks of local AIDS support groups and HIV-positive activists, and developed the Stepping Stones AIDS prevention programme.

#### *Food security and trade rules*

Poverty and hunger are closely linked. ActionAid works to improve food supplies and prevent famine by providing seeds, tools, animal feed, fertiliser, loans and training. ActionAid also campaigns for people's rights to food, and for fairer trade and patent laws that don't discriminate against poor people.

#### *Peace building*

In the contemporary armed conflicts of the world, over 80% of casualties are civilian. ActionAid is working with communities to develop sustainable local initiatives that build peace and prevent conflict from re-emerging. This is done by rebuilding lives and livelihoods; encouraging former soldiers and victims to communicate; identifying problems and resolving issues locally.

see for yourself> [www.actionaid.org](http://www.actionaid.org)

### Education

ActionAid's education work focuses on primary education and adult literacy. Reflect is an innovative approach to adult literacy and empowerment, whilst Access provides informal primary education for children who can't attend school due to the cost, distance or a need to work or help with household chores. ActionAid also initiated the Elimu campaign to put pressure on governments to live up to their promises and provide free, quality, primary education to all children. ActionAid Schools and Youth team produces educational materials for use in UK classrooms.

### Emergencies

Overcoming poverty in the long-term is made especially difficult when people are hit by emergencies, and poor people are often the most vulnerable. ActionAid recognises that people's rights are often denied in emergencies. When an emergency happens, ActionAid works with the most vulnerable communities to assess their needs and provide immediate assistance. They take a long-term approach to help people recover once the immediate needs of an emergency have been addressed. ActionAid also helps people plan how to reduce the risk and impact of any future disasters, and tackles the factors that make certain people more vulnerable to disasters in the first place.

### Other facts

- 1 ActionAid had an income of £68.1million in 2001.
- 2 ActionAid helped over 9 million people in 2001.
- 3 The ActionAid Alliance consists of partner organisations in France, Greece, Ireland, Italy and Spain.
- 4 ActionAid has 120,000 individual supporters.

# actionaid and the work of an ngo

You almost certainly know the names of lots of charities and NGOs, and you might have a rough idea of what they do. However, most organisations do a wider variety of work that you would probably imagine.

## What is an NGO?

NGO stands for 'non-governmental organisation'. There are many different types of NGO including development organisations (eg ActionAid), religious groups (eg Church of England), charities (eg Marie Curie), environmental agencies (eg Greenpeace) etc.

**Brainstorm** – list as many NGOs as you can think of then sort them into groups. What are the main similarities and differences between the groups?

## What is ActionAid?

ActionAid is one of the UK's largest international development organisations, helping poor people in 35 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. ActionAid works for a world without poverty in which every person can live in dignity. ActionAid is trying to get rid of poverty by changing the conditions that cause it.

**Mapwork** – ActionAid works in the following countries:

Bangladesh, Bolivia, Brazil, Burundi, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, China, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Haiti, India, Kenya, Laos, Liberia, Malawi, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somaliland, Tanzania, Thailand, Vietnam, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Locate these countries on a map of the world.

The ActionAid approach to development (the rights-based approach)

ActionAid has four goals:

- 1 To help poor people exercise their basic rights**  
Poor people are often denied their basic rights of safe water, food, education, shelter, healthcare and a life of dignity.
- 2 To work in partnership to achieve greater impact**  
ActionAid ensures that a community's real needs are met by working in partnership with local organisations.
- 3 To promote change internationally**

ActionAid's campaigning work helps poor people to make their voices heard by those who have the power to change things.

## 4 To improve gender equity

ActionAid works to gain equal status for women and men, especially within the areas of education and health.

**Research** – find out more about the rights based approach on [www.actionaid.org](http://www.actionaid.org)

## What does ActionAid work on?

### HIV/ AIDS

HIV/ AIDS is one of the biggest challenges facing the world today. ActionAid provides practical support to affected communities, trains counsellors and health educators, forms networks of support groups and supports education and communication programmes. ActionAid's international campaign encourages individuals and governments to do what is needed to support this work in developing countries.

### Food security and trade rules

Poverty and hunger are closely linked. ActionAid works to improve food supplies and prevent famine by providing seeds, tools, animal feed, fertiliser, loans and training. ActionAid also campaigns for people's rights to food, and for fairer trade laws that don't discriminate against poor people.

### Peace building

In most conflicts today, over 80% of casualties are civilian. ActionAid is helping communities achieve lasting peace by helping victims and former soldiers rebuild their lives, and encouraging communication and local problem-solving.

### Education

ActionAid's education work focuses on primary and adult education. Reflect teaches adults to read by using local issues, whilst Access provides primary education for children who can't go to school due to the cost, distance or a need to work or help with household chores. ActionAid also puts pressure on governments to live up to their promises and provide free, quality,

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primary education for all children. ActionAid's Schools and Youth team produces educational materials for use in UK classrooms.

### Emergencies

Emergencies often hit poor people hardest and can undo development work that has already taken place. People's rights are often denied in emergency situations. When an emergency happens, ActionAid works with the most vulnerable communities to discuss their needs and provide immediate help. ActionAid also start long-term work to help people rebuild their lives and protect themselves from future emergencies.

Research – find out more about two of these areas of work by logging on to [www.actionaid.org](http://www.actionaid.org) and going to 'our priorities'.

### Case studies

Read - the case studies below  
Discuss - which aspects of ActionAid's work does each case study fit into? Which goals does it achieve? Some case studies may fit into several categories.

#### India

Radhamani Mundari lives in the village of Nagratolla, India, where ActionAid works in partnership with a local rural development group called DISHA. ActionAid introduced the villagers to the idea of Lok Yojana (people's plans) and the Reflect approach to adult literacy.

We learned how to develop our own community plans and how we could work together to get the Panchayat



(local government) to accept these plans. Every month all the villagers attend a review meeting. These help DISHA and ActionAid to understand our progress and what support we may require. At first it was very strange for women to be invited to these meetings. I feel much more confident now and you can see the difference in other young and old women of the villages.

#### Sierra Leone

In Sierra Leone, ActionAid works closely with a youth peace group whose members include ex-soldiers as young as 12. They work on the Never again campaign to ensure that the atrocities of the last civil war are never repeated. The Organisation for Peace, Reconciliation and Development (OPARD) uses two video equipped vehicles provided by ActionAid to spread messages of peace across the country.

ActionAid responded immediately after the Gujarat earthquake to provide food, shelter, counselling, community centres and day care for orphaned children. ActionAid targeted vulnerable survivors and closely involved them in decisions on re-building their shattered communities.

#### Brazil

In Brazil, ActionAid works to empower peasant farmers by helping them access adequate food and water supplies. ActionAid works with partner organisation, AS-PTA, in the dry areas of Paraiba to set up drought prevention schemes and establish banks of drought resistant seeds. ActionAid is also involved in lobbying the Brazilian government on behalf of the poor, and raising farmers' awareness of their rights.

#### Uganda

In Uganda, ActionAid is supporting a radio station and theatre group which discuss the obstacles girls face in getting a decent education- including rape, early marriage and pregnancy. These programmes have raised community awareness of girls' rights to education and sexual health.

The spread of HIV/ AIDS, particularly in Africa, often reflects the reality of life in societies where women have little say over their sexual lives. Much of ActionAid's HIV work focuses on supporting infected women, who may be driven from their homes and denied their basic rights. Prisca Mhlolo is a member of the Network of Zimbabwean Positive Women, who spread the message about HIV/ AIDS in their local communities. ActionAid supports this network by training the women using their Stepping Stones



HIV prevention programme. ActionAid is also working to help women pursue their rights to sexual health, and has empowered Zimbabwean women to successfully campaign for female condoms to be distributed locally.



PHOTOS: ActionAid © 2003