



# Equality Citizenship & Justice

Third Country Strategy Paper  
2005-2009

This Third Country Strategy Paper is dedicated  
to the memory of our late Country Director  
Nasreen Pervin Huq



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## Foreword

ActionAid Bangladesh's Country Strategy Paper draws from a concerted and rigorous process of analysis of the dynamics of poverty creation and obstruction of rights of the poorest and marginalized. The CSP III brings forth the vision of Equality, Citizenship and Justice and shapes that vision with clear, directed interventions that are principled on ensuring rights of the poorest and excluded groups.

In its evolution as a development organization, ActionAid Bangladesh has shifted towards a rights-based approach in keeping with a growing body of knowledge and experience on the structural causes of poverty. The CSP III seeks to consolidate and strengthen this approach by way of addressing the rights of women, excluded groups and the livelihoods of the poor and marginalized. Moreover, the new CSP recognizes the global policies, processes and projects through which national sovereignty has become undermined and thus affirms its linkage with ActionAid International's Global Strategy Paper- Rights to End Poverty. In so doing, CSP III articulates the need to question and challenge prevailing assumptions of how economies grow and develop and shape policies that are firmly centered on the visions and aspirations of the poor.

The CSP is largely a collective output and drawn on the participation of stakeholders. This paper captures the input from various strata of the civil society - national networks and coalitions, NGOs (local, national and international), trade unions, activists, government officials, politicians and most importantly, the marginalised people AAB works with. These preparatory workshops served mainly two purposes: first, the information, perspectives and analyses emerging from discussions are envisaged to contribute to AAB's operational interventions. Secondly, the consultations provided input to the preparation of the strategic paper, encapsulating ground realities. Thus, this paper is a collated and consolidated version of AAB's strategic vision embedded in local and global reality, prepared by a working group consisting of representatives from AAB's various themes and functions. In this regard, grateful acknowledgement is made to the memory of Nasreen Pervin Huq, whose life-long passion and commitment to fighting injustice firmly anchored and fuelled the preparation of this CSP. We strongly believe that her indomitable spirit is infused in this CSP and will provide us with an unrelenting drive towards making the dream of Equality, Citizenship and Justice a reality.

On behalf of ActionAid Bangladesh Staff

CSP III Writing Team

## Introduction

Establishment of global solidarity through partnership between the people in the North and South was the key idea to establish Action Aid International (AAI) as a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) in the United Kingdom (UK) in 1972. In Bangladesh, NGOs emerged as major development actors only after the independence of the country in 1971. The nature and magnitude of development needs after the independence required a State, which the post-liberation governments were struggling to deliver. In 1983, AAI launched a field-based programme in Bhola, a remote island in the south, with a view to improving the lives and community livelihood.

In 1993, after almost 10 years, ActionAid Bangladesh (AAB) developed its first Country Strategy Paper (CSP) [1994-1998] stressing direct implementation of programme in the selected development area (DA), engagement and advocacy with the government, identification and promotion of special issues, research and policy work. The second CSP (1999-2003) expanded the programme through strengthening and diversifying partnership, launching campaigns and initiating policy work including micro-macro linkages and regionalisation.

In August 2003, CSP II (update) underwent an external review involving rigorous process of internal consultations and stakeholder survey. A peer review from AAI followed. Later, AAB started preparing CSP III with an internal process of annual retreat 2004 and consideration of the review findings. In addition, AAB met community people and NGOs in different geographical and ecological areas to share the ideas for the new CSP. A national consultation with some of the leading developmental experts of the country was held at the Planning Commission in Dhaka with secretary to the Ministry of Planning in the chair. Three other consultations focusing on women, people with disability and people from diverse ethnic and linguistic communities have also provided inputs to the preparation of CSP III.

Meanwhile, AAB has evolved from an externally led direct implementing organisation to a nationally led international organisation working through partnership with over 89 community-based partner organisations in over 35 districts. In addition, it engages with national and regional development networks for promotion and advocacy of specific issues and policies. AAB has earned a profile for working with the marginalised people through advocacy and policy influence, for being supportive to the affected during humanitarian crisis and for critically engaging with organisations including IFIs to influence policy change.

AAB is internationally accountable on organisational and mission-related issues. At the national level, it is accountable to the government both on organisation and mission-related issues and to its peers for its mission-related issues. Under CSP III, it will also become accountable to a national board composed of development practitioners, social leaders and academics.

The timeframe for CSP III will be 2005-2009. It coincides with the preparation of the new strategy for ActionAid International.

# Identity and Approaches

ActionAid Bangladesh (AAB) is an international organisation with national accountability. It acts locally and effects globally through international linkages. In its fight for eradication of poverty it shares a common Vision, Mission and Values, which glue together all AA offices worldwide.

## Vision

A world without poverty and injustice in which every person enjoys their right to a life with dignity.

## Mission

“To work with poor and excluded people to eradicate poverty and injustice”.

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## Values

ActionAid Bangladesh will live by the following 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 to everyone, irrespective of race, age, sex, sexual orientation, HIV status, colour, class, ethnicity, disability, location and religion

**Honesty and transparency**: requiring us to be accountable at all levels for the effectiveness of our actions and open in our judgments and communications with others

**Solidarity with the poor, powerless and excluded** will be the only bias in our commitment to the fight against poverty

**Courage of conviction**, requiring us to be creative and radical, bold and innovative without fear of failure in pursuit of making the greatest possible impact on the causes of poverty

**Independence** from any religious or political affiliation

**Humility** in our presentation and behaviour, recognising that we are part of a wider alliance against poverty

# Approaches

While pursuing the mission and being guided by its values, AAB will follow the following approaches gathered and tested from its development practices in Bangladesh. Together with the Vision, Mission and Values, the approaches constitute the worldview of AAB, determine its analysis of the development context and help devise its Goals, Objectives, Outcomes and Strategies.

## **Participation, Empowerment and Reflect**

AAB firmly believes that people's participation in their own development is essential for sustainability and effectiveness. **Reflect**<sup>1</sup> is a key tool for effective participation of people, which can lead to social transformation. AAB facilitates the participation of the poor and marginalised communities in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluation of development activities. It constantly develops new approaches to ensure greater voice and assertion of their rights from duty-bearers. Reflect promotes collective analysis and action to bring possible changes. It also delineates the changes needed in policy and practice to ensure equality and justice.

## **Rights-Based Approach**

In alignment with the global strategy of AAI and based on its own experience AAB believes that its future work should consider the poor and marginalised people as rights-holding citizens to claim that the State promotes, respects and protects their rights to meet their basic needs and lead a dignified life. Such an approach will address both the conditions and causes of poverty thereby protecting the poor and the marginalised from oppressors.

## **Partnership**

AAB's experience with partnership with the local organisations suggests that its continuation will broaden the realm of its reach and influence in programme implementation, ensure a broader commitment and give a greater strength and legitimacy because decisions are taken at the ground.

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<sup>1</sup> Reflect is a process of adult learning and collective analysis for social change and transformation. Reflect incorporates Freirean pedagogy with participatory approaches.

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### **Network and Alliances**

Based on fruitful experiences in the recent past, AAB believes that concerted and synergistic efforts at national, regional and international levels can ensure a better fight against poverty, injustice and inequality. Therefore, it strives for building theme or issue based networks and alliances with organisations.

### **Research and Advocacy**

AAB, with its linkage at the policy level nationally and globally, has a unique status as an advocacy organisation. Advocacy is also a recognised tool to effect rights-based changes. AAB believes that research generates novel advocacy issues and advocacy without research misses credibility. Towards this end, AAB has developed its capacity for research and strategy development.

### **Innovation**

AAB believes that in order to assert influence at the policy level, it is important to remain at the cutting edge of development thought and practice. For that, AAB will continue to support innovation in development practice and communication.

# Development Context of Bangladesh

## 2.1 AN ACCOUNT OF A CONSOLIDATING STATE

Since the independence in 1971, Bangladesh has transformed from a country of despair to a country of hope. In a history of thirty-four years as an independent nation, Bangladesh saw her progress being punctuated by military rule. In December 1990, military rule was overthrown amid a popular uprising and a system of elections under a neutral caretaker government was introduced, which was later institutionalised through a constitutional amendment. The signs of the genesis of a tolerant democracy are visible but yet to be consolidated. The bleak projections of the early 1970s<sup>2</sup> which were marked by famine in a war-torn country and economic stagnation have been left behind.

### **Achievements...**

The 1990s laid the foundation of hope with the restoration of democracy and some sort of government accountability. The decade of the 90s, in spite of the political impasse in parliament and the spate of opposition agitation and shutdowns represent a period of economic growth and social progress. State policies for social development, despite the inadequacies in implementation, bore fruit. In 2003, Bangladesh graduated from the *low human development* to the *medium human development* league in UNDP's Human Development Report ranking. Remarkable achievements have been made in the area of health and education. In the last ten years, the economy of the country has grown at an annual rate of approximately five per cent. Yet poverty declined at an extremely slow pace of only one per cent per year. The flip side of this trickle down effect on poverty has been the growth of an upper class and a growing gulf of inequality between the rich and poor. The benefits of the economic growth have largely accrued to the growing upper and middle class, who are the main benefactors of the biased social practices and relations and unjust globalisation processes including structural adjustment programmes.

By far the success of Bangladesh has been due to the determination of its people to persevere with all odds and move forward. In less than three decades, the worldview of Bangladesh people has changed. In 1972, few people had ever ventured outside their district and today almost every village is connected to the international community through mobile phones. Migrant workers from all corners of Bangladesh are now working in different parts of the world. Remittances from migrant workers alone in 2003 were equivalent to amount of the international assistance received by Bangladesh. People, especially women, have opted for a smaller family and the fertility has plunged from over 6 in the 1970s to 3 in 2000. Women and girls have come out in the public domain in greater numbers than ever before to pursue education, employment and livelihood opportunities as well as to cast their votes. Opportunities in the garments sector for women and the social policy to promote free education for girls, which began in the 1980s, were sustained through the 1990s and have continued to grow. The availability of micro-credit in rural areas has fuelled the rural economy both in terms of increased farm production as well expansion of the off-farm service sector.

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<sup>2</sup> Most infamous remark was from Henry Kissinger, Secretary of State, USA, who termed Bangladesh as 'bottomless basket case' in 1974.

The poor people today are not as tightly locked into the feudal arrangements as they were in the past. Today they aspire for more than the mere freedom from poverty they aspire to be treated with dignity. They want not just primary education for their children, but advanced education that will give them opportunities for economic advancement and “real power” to influence policy and programmes in Bangladesh.

### **Challenges...**

Despite the remarkable achievements, it is important to note that there remain major challenges. Poverty is still unacceptably high with almost half of the population living below the poverty line. This proportion increases with reference to geography, ethnicity, disability and gender who suffer varying forms of discrimination leading to their marginalisation. People in remote char<sup>3</sup>, coastal and hilly areas are poorer. People of ethnicities other than Bangalee are poorer and suffer discrimination. Their livelihoods are constantly threatened as they are frequently evicted from their traditional lands. Government acquisition of their traditional land in the name of, for instance, 'eco-park' is nothing but a threat to their existence. They are often cheated from their properties for their relative innocence and illiteracy. People with disability are discriminated even at the household and are deprived of opportunities for development which could help them to earn a decent living. They are also frequently cheated from their rights to property within the family; women and girls suffer discrimination in all spheres and are much more vulnerable to falling below the poverty line a single act of violence can make her destitute at any moment. This vulnerability stems from a socio-cultural practice and beliefs as well as the lack of legal framework of the country.

The ecological vulnerability of a lower riparian country is augmented manifold with a powerful upper-riparian country taking measures to divert water from the rivers that flow into Bangladesh. It has become a country of dying rivers that are wreaking havoc with the traditional livelihoods of the people in the country. Loss of fisheries and river erosion are some of the major reasons for people to spiral into extreme poverty.

Recurring natural disasters continue to make people, particularly the poor and marginalised more vulnerable. Climate change and global warming are leading to an increased frequency in the occurrence of natural disasters floods, flash floods, tornadoes, cyclone, tidal waves, drought and earthquake.

Government policies and strategies for poverty reduction have failed to address the need to increase productive employment. On the contrary, structural adjustment measures and government policy and practice with regard to imports have resulted in shutting down of several industries resulting in loss of jobs. New employment has largely been in the export-led industries and which are vulnerable to international policies. For example, the phasing out of the multi-fibre agreement and subsequent move by buyers to other countries, jobs in the garment sector have declined.

The agriculture sector remains the major sector for rural employment. While there has been an increase in agricultural output, the prospect of Genetically Modified (GM) and hybrid seeds threaten the future of agriculture in this country a prospect of which the government is quite oblivious as it engages with the companies to actively promote these technologies.

The emphasis on the export-led development has also had its impact on the agriculture sector. The previously food surplus south-western belt of Bangladesh has been transformed into a

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<sup>3</sup> “Char” is the Bangla word for island and is generally referred to island in rivers.

shrimp zone, which has resulted in food deficits and pauperisation of the farmers. Lands once owned by marginal farmers for rice cultivation have been grabbed, either illegally or under legal cover, for the franchise of the local business elite. The high premium on shrimp and resultant dire poverty has meant that shrimp lords, who have received large landholdings through government leasing policy, are using armed protection for the shrimp, which has spawned criminalisation and prostitution in what was once a fairly quiet part of the country. The government has never taken into account the environmental havoc created, which if considered certainly makes shrimp business a losing concern. Rather, the government has been inactive and indifferent to the woes and losses incurred by the poor and powerless.

By far the greatest challenge ahead lies in the area of accountable governance. A transparent, local government still eludes the people. Instead, we face a government that is highly centralised and evasive. If one wants to make any government service accountable, he/she is confronted with an extremely complex system where everyone is dependant on another and staffs who most skilfully evade any responsibilities are rewarded. For the fourth year in a row, Bangladesh has topped Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index. Despite having a functional democracy, the political arena is plagued by a dysfunctional parliament, resulting in confrontational politics, where street agitation has been the norm but the parliament is free of debate in fact quorum crisis is a frequent phenomenon.

The government carries on its business in an extremely centralised fashion, with the cabinet taking major decisions, without being accountable to the parliament, and by extension to the people. Donor institutions such as the World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) are pushing forth with their policies on structural adjustment as preconditions for disbursement of aid and credit. These institutions have come up with a unique mechanism to circumvent the question of accountability participation in consultative sessions is seen as the validation for their policies. The proposed Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), which the Bangladesh government has prepared to fulfil its obligation to the World Bank and IMF for receiving credit, has done its share of participatory consultations, and it will soon become the framework for all development assistance to Bangladesh. This emphasis on participation has resulted in the sprouting of made-to-order of civil society forums and NGO contractors. This has also provided a challenge for genuine people's movements and associations of the civil society.

Another threat to popular movements and the civil society, come from the religious forces, which have since 9/11 emerged as an opposition to the west. There has been a rise in religious intolerance and bigotry, which threatens the apparent secular foundations of the society. This coupled with the precarious and vulnerable situation of the separatist movements in North-eastern India poses the possibility for development of violent conflict in the near future in Bangladesh.

Government policies through various means have created a local elite class benefiting from privatisation of sectors such as fertiliser, seed and irrigation. These new fertiliser and water markets have benefited mostly the high-income rural households who have greater access to formal finance<sup>4</sup>. To support the development of this new emerging class, the GoB has taken on liberal import policies while providing import credits in these markets. Although safety net programmes for the rural poor such as Food for Works, Test Relief, and Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) have been hailed as the success stories of Bangladesh, they belie a deepening of inequality as a direct result of national policies of privatisation of sectors which were once in the public domain.

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<sup>4</sup> Rashid Faruquee, ed. Bangladesh Agriculture in the 21st Century.

Poverty and discrimination are coupled with socio-economic policies and practices that favour the dominant groups and are contributing to rising inequality between the rich and the poor. Rather than introducing state policy and programmes to reduce inequality, Bangladesh proceeded to shrinking the role of the state and a paradigm shift towards the private sector as the key engine of economic growth. Increased trade and the removal of barriers to trade were also hailed as the new panacea for sluggish economic growth. An enlarged state role was seen as crowding out investment in the private sector. Consequently, trickle down economics was favoured over direct safety net programmes and employment generation for the semi-skilled labour force. In the last ten years, the fiscal expenditure has remained around 15%.

While aid dependency in Bangladesh has declined, it remains a critical input for the national development. Unfortunately, this aid has been accepted very much on donor terms for a prescribed model of development, that favours shrinking role of government and privatisation of national resources. Aid projects have spanned various sectors including agriculture, forestry, environment, infrastructure, power and telecommunications. These donor-sponsored projects have not only benefited the markets and consultants of the North as a result of tied conditionality, but also spawned a national industrialist class within the country. From the period of 1972 to 2001, for instance, out of a total of US\$ 36 billion, only 25 per cent reached the poor with the remaining going to both the national elite and the donor countries<sup>5</sup>. This not only reflects the poor status of governance of foreign aid, it also displays the nexus of economic class beyond borders.

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### **Opportunities...**

The issues, trends and the threats stated above posed for a bleak future of Bangladesh. Amid an apparent sea of hopelessness the scenarios are optimistic. The advancement of Bangladesh in terms of reducing infant mortality and increasing contraceptive prevalence, access to safe water, enrolment in primary education is impressive. Especially public awareness, mutual cooperation, and strong determination to help each other in distress broadly the Social Capital is remarkable by any measure. People of Bangladesh have shown the zeal to survive against all odds. They eke out a livelihood under any circumstances with whatever they have. Their fight against the recurring floods has hardened them to the point that living with flood has become second nature to them. People all over the country are demanding their fair share of the resources so that they can live a proper life. Women are becoming more and more proactive to raise their voices against inequity, injustice and violence and men began to support them in their cause. People began to realise and challenge the negative effects of the globalisation and raise their voices. There are also windows of opportunity to influence the development of effective policy and programmes with the government of Bangladesh.

ActionAid International, which has been working in Bangladesh since 1983, is uniquely placed to address the developmental challenges that the people of Bangladesh will face in the coming years. Over the past 20 years ActionAid Bangladesh (AAB) has established a track record for working effectively with communities for their advancement and empowerment. Since 1998, AAB has expanded its partnership to include organisations from vulnerable locations throughout the country. It has developed expertise in working with the disabled, development of adolescent programmes. AAB's partnerships on the ground are with the organisations led by the marginalised people and with formal and informal networks of people's movements, which genuinely defend the interests of the people.

The special characteristics of AAI to promote and strengthen national leadership within an international organisation, and its funding structure provide AAB with a unique opportunity to pursue the challenges faced by Bangladesh in the coming years through development of innovative grassroots programmes and provide policy insights and directions. This will provide AAB the strategic advantage for pursuing a programme on equality, citizenship and justice.

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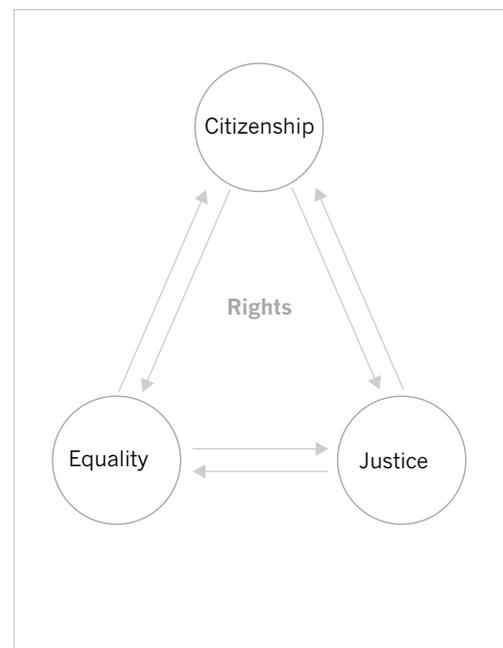
<sup>5</sup> Abul Barakat, Bangladesh Economic Association Conference, A Political Economy of Foreign Assistance in Bangladesh, 2000

## 2.2 AN ACCOUNT ON THE SYSTEMS OF EQUALITY, CITIZENSHIP AND JUSTICE

Equality, Citizenship and Justice as the future approach of AAB reflects a desire to promote equality tantamount to full citizenship for the poor and marginal groups and a recognition that human rights problems are rooted in the diverse conceptions of equality and citizenship that are inherent in our history and culture. The background of the caste system in our consciousness has legitimized a social practice of inequality even among the most educated. This influences both citizenship and justice for those who are poor, marginalised or excluded. The struggle for liberation and the independence inspired a greater commitment and the universality of human rights which was subsequently enshrined in the Constitution of Bangladesh. Although independence led to the recognition of voting rights for all (people who had come as indentured labour to work in the plantations from Southern India during the British rule were granted the right to vote only after the independence of Bangladesh), translation of the aspiration for reality and the universality of fundamental rights to reality has been a challenge. This is only partly due to the chequered history of autocratic and military rule. Socio-cultural values on rights and privilege have long been established that some people are “more equal” and hence their rights of citizenship are different and there is a differential application of the law.

A rights-based approach to development implies recognition of the rights of people not only to fulfil their basic needs, but also to be treated with equal dignity and realise their creative potential and state obligations to create an enabling environment for assertion of their fundamental rights. In the promotion of the rights based approach to end poverty and injustice, the concepts of equality, citizenship and justice are critical. This is outlined in the schematic diagram below.

Efforts for recognition of equal citizenship open up numerous avenues with immense potentialities still unexplored and underutilised, while laws and policies striving for “blind” equality among the citizens continue to be refined and yet pull back the most disadvantaged. This is not a result of the loopholes in the laws and lack of a good governance mechanism in Bangladesh, but rather failure to acknowledge the systematic process of denial and subordination that patronises inequality and the need for substantive affirmative action, measures and policies. The system



bars economic justice mechanism in the country, and accumulates resources for a group which results in creation of wealth among a privileged few and abject poverty for the majority<sup>6</sup>. The processes of globalisation and the neo-liberal paradigm are superimposed on this pre-existing social structure.

### **Citizenship: Social inclusion and exclusion**

Citizenship is a multilayered concept of legal and social inclusion. The basic denial of equality as a principle in establishing citizenship has resulted in an informal caste system among the citizenry which excludes some and includes others to varying degrees<sup>7</sup>. The concept of social and cultural equality in areas where other ethnicities live in large numbers (like Jamalpur and Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) where the ethnic groups/races like Chakmas, Santals, river gypsies live) are under constant threat of violation. While the destruction of environment results in loss of their livelihood, the dual standards in application of the law mean and that these groups are vulnerable to violation of their right by the dominant ethnicity. Their languages are under constant threat, cultures are being eclipsed by aggressive cultures, and they experience encroachment into their environment and society.

The emergence of Bangladesh through popular struggle has established an aspiration for equal citizenship. Yet dual practice of citizenship and right to justice: economic, social and moral, are followed everywhere. Social exclusion is a partial or full exclusion from full citizenship. Citizenship includes civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. Hence, social justice and social inclusion is a norm to accommodate changing systems and shaping culture that guarantee the rights of full citizenship. Conception of social justice is rooted in the principles of equal benefit and rights for all: an entitlement of all to sustainable livelihoods, access to health and quality education, housing and other basic necessities; opportunities and access to resources; and reducing/ eliminating unjust inequalities by continuing and contesting for it.

Ethnic minorities and people with differently abilities along with women, adolescents, and children constitute extremely vulnerable groups. Bangladesh has been able to prepare and agree on different forms of strict laws and policies to take a stand as a state in promoting and protecting the rights of these citizens. She is also a signatory to CRC, CEDAW, UDHR, Dakar, Alma Ata conventions at the international level. However, due to weak governance and inadequate attention sprouting from the exploitative nature of the national structure, these commitments have largely remained rhetorical.

<sup>6</sup> For example: in the early 70s the number of billionaires was very few but today there are several hundred billionaires. Merely few hundreds which then grew up to tens of thousands at the beginning of 21st century, leaving behind the poor yet to exercise their full citizenship. The number of poor people living below poverty [DCI (Daily Calorie Intake) method] in 2000 was 55.91 million which was 44.33 per cent of the total population; while in 1995-96 the number of the poor people was 55.28 million which was 47.53 per cent of the total population. That means in five years time, although the percentage of the poor may have gone down by 3 percent, but the number of poor people had in fact gone up by six hundred and thirty thousand. And yet, the nation saw an economic growth of Tk 500 billion in five years, which mostly accumulated to the richer sections.

<sup>7</sup> As an example though the people of Kurigram were not grossly disenfranchised after the emergence of democracy since the nineties, non-availability of sustainable livelihood options, insecurity and proneness to disaster have violated their economic and civil rights as citizen.

### **Focus on inclusive justice**

Poor people living in urban slums or in the *char* areas with poverty have reduced access to services, and are discriminated on the grounds that they live in a 'poor area', and thus are often treated as the 'invisible citizens' class. Usually they do not have any formal national identity. Although every government and ruling class tends to be sympathetic towards them, there is no public finance mechanism or legislative framework in place to protect these people from being further eroded into poverty. Authorities have shown reluctance to include these people experiencing extreme poverty in identifying their appropriate livelihood options. This itself is a form of discrimination.

A combination of poverty and factors enhancing marginalisation that bring about social exclusion are severe in nature. Women, adolescent and elderly groups, ethnic minorities, refugees, gypsies, marginal occupational groups, and disabled people form a disproportionate number of people living in poverty in Bangladesh. Ethnic minorities, children, the disabled and women have been offered very little within the mainstream policy space. They are still not offered a distinct school curriculum that respects and honours their traditions, language and culture. Mainstreaming requires the denial of their diverse ethnic and linguistic identities promoting the hegemony of a monolithic culture and identity (which taken to its logical conclusion results in the promotion of one ideology and leader resulting in confrontational politics).

Donor projects<sup>8</sup> have exacerbated the condition, taking away the land and in turn, the livelihoods of the ethnic minorities who resided within these areas. Wage discrimination is yet another pervasive condition in which ethnic minorities and women suffer greater discrimination making mockery of the concept of 'equal pay for equal work.'

Women are, by far, accorded the least, from the policy sphere to the household level. Policies generally address solely the woman's reproductive role and focus more reducing fertility. 'Women as agents of change' is hardly addressed in government policies. Rather, micro credit is seen to be the precursor to the apparent "quiet revolution" although it has not taken women far beyond the confines of their home. In fact, the gendered division of labour is a prominent force in which women take on traditional roles both within the household and in the workplace. The legal framework enhances the subordination of women and they live under the constant fear of violence.

A development approach to fight poverty without a vision of equality will never be successful in achieving social and economic justice. ActionAid Bangladesh envisions equality in a manner that will facilitate one to see the connections between economic inequality and inequality based on social divisions such as age, disability, race, sex, religion, ethnicity, language spoken, and belief systems. Mainstreaming equality by integrating principles of equality and strategies for all groups will fight the structures that fuel discrimination and disadvantage, and therefore, equality would be mainstreamed.

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<sup>8</sup> Modhupur EcoPark Project and Kaptai Dam are two examples.

### **The national and international structure fuelling inequality and injustice**

Usually policies related to social justice give minimal focus on equality issues unrelated to economic inequalities. Similarly, social justice related policies rarely include economic inequality. Systems that deal with the two are quite different. Yet, social justice and economic equalities are closely interwoven. For example, people living in poverty are more likely to be disabled than others, and disabled people are more likely to be poor than able-bodied people. This implies that disability may be implicated in both the causes and effects of poverty. So the *unpacking of the equality dimension* of social justice can bring in meaningful understanding of the interrelatedness of social justice and economic equality.

For example, since the 1990s, if not earlier, community of the rich/developed nations focused on three issues. The first was economic contractions in the poor countries that called for adjustment for stabilities. The second one called for political subjugation of the poor countries. The first issue signifies power without responsibility of the rich countries; the second issue indicates responsibility without power of the poor countries. The third implies both, which means without structural constraints, the social justice among the countries could be a possible reality. Then the most important question is the constraints that impede a poor country like Bangladesh, both growth and social justice.

With regard to social justice, the conception of fairness as neutrality encourages one to observe various nuances in wisdoms embedded in institutions and practices. These may not be adequately reflected in prevailing theoretical formulations. Like any other democratic state, Bangladesh, as a neutral state, will have hard choices to reconcile with. For example, should the government allocate public expenditure on external security or invest in social development? Only when the state becomes driven by special interests or bias, can it make priorities.

Similarly, taking fairness as impartiality is understood more closely as the intuitive sense of what is required of justice. In fact, the choices of government are neither politically nor culturally neutral. Indeed, in existing democratic environment of Bangladesh and its current practices, there is very little public expenditure that is truly neutral between competing interests. Frequently that is the point of the expenditure where one class or section decides the pattern of expenditure after being elected by the people of the country for whom they are meant to serve. In Bangladesh, equality for all groups who are running behind is a primary agenda. But, probably, due to the impartial nature (or partial towards the powerful) of the public finance the allocation on those sectors is either appallingly low or tilted towards the powerful. In 2003-04, for example, the public expenditure allocation on women and children affairs was .45 per cent of the total expenditure, and investment on them group (including youth and social welfare) was 1 per cent of government investment. However, there is no gender-segregated analysis of the budget that can give the amount of how much is spent of whom.

## 2.3 UNDERSTANDING POVERTY AND TAKING POSITION IN FAVOUR OF THE POOR

ActionAid Bangladesh needs to both broaden and deepen the range of programmatic interventions to address the deeply felt need for comprehensive standards of rights of poor and extremely marginalised, and effective monitoring of compliance by the rights providers, namely the key institutions of the country. It must pursue initiatives with potential to rekindle the latent principles of equality and citizenship, to mobilise public and governmental resources as a change agent for the poor, and to escalate region-specific interventions on expanded rights for the most vulnerable groups in practice. In collaboration with partner NGOs from different corners of the country and abroad, it must aim to contribute to the emergence of both countrywide and worldwide coalitions, bringing out amplified voice of the unheard communities. AAB can play important roles to protect, enact and facilitate the process of enforcing pro-poor policies to establish livelihood options even if it occasionally encounters tension with the State.

The mainstream culture of development tends to fuel, in some form, inequality. It escapes the question of why people are poor for a long time, rather has engaged itself how people are poor. These two aspects of poverty guide to look for creators of poverty and how the process of wealth creation in the society is linked with poverty. The issue is how is it possible to have a pro-poor economic growth that can both sustain a minimum take off growth and emancipate the poor. The rights of the poor and the marginalised deserve special attention, both within the context of equality and beyond, since understanding poverty is not necessarily an understanding of mere facts and figures; it is also an understanding of the process of accumulation of wealth and affluence. This is also an understanding of the system making special groups poorer, a system trapping and turning the existing poor into other forms of disadvantaged groups. Accumulation not only creates wealth but also conserves privileges for the powerful.

As mentioned earlier, economic justice, inclusion and equality are interlinked. Therefore, for the underprivileged class to enjoy rights of a full citizen, AAB requires a multi-prong intervention to ensure the Equality and Justice for Citizenship for the poor.

Firstly, AAB needs to identify sustainable livelihood options for the poor and marginalised groups to ensure a minimum dignified life free from hunger, vulnerability to disasters (human-made or natural) and morbidity due to poor nutrition. Access to natural resources and public services is an additional issue, as national and international policies practice squeezes their public and natural spaces resulting either in eviction or being driven-out from their space.

Secondly, AAB would address women issues, which means tackling poverty, inequality and violence against them. Women are thus entry points for multi-faceted development activities of AAB. We need to concentrate not only on women but also on the women of tomorrow-the “Adolescents”- especially the adolescent girls. We need to invest on them so that they can be better citizens of future. AAB would also need to intervene in the area of violence against women and girls in its various facets as this holds them back from developing themselves as worthy citizens of the country.

Thirdly, working on poverty is primarily working with the poor, and going back to the references what creates not-haves. AAB will address this and work with the groups who are mostly marginalised and victimised. It will focus on the areas where poverty concentration is the most and the people who experience exclusion the most i.e. the ethnic minority people, people with disability, people living with HIV/AIDS and people from marginalised professions.

Fourthly, the poor and marginalised deserve to be seen not as recipients of favours, but rather rights-holding citizens with the claim of becoming human capital through quality education, marketable and productive skills, health care, awareness on development issues and proper nutrition. Their integration to institutions and with other groups will help them create enormous social capital. AAB sees a role in demanding from the State (duty bearers) services to establish a sustainable human capital and create a room for social capital. AAB needs to be clear about the fact that the State is struggling with its mandate due to insufficient budgetary allocations and immense policy control of international financial institutions. As these institutions gradually broadened their authority, AAB needs to deal with both the government and institutions for making the poor and marginalised strong human capital and their institutions strong social capital.

The role of international financial institutions must be assessed in the context of overall poverty eradication in Bangladesh. These institutions that work to promote the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), have recently shifted their focus on pro-poor growth. But at the same time their complementary activities offset the very goals they purportedly seek to achieve. Additionally, these organisations work as the signalling agent for other development organisations, which determines where the other bilateral and multilateral development agencies will work. They also dictate governments on the most important macroeconomic policies that help multi-national corporations to penetrate the local market and destroy the development of the local industrialisation process. It is therefore essential to understand how global institutions are having an impact on the lives of the poor living in Satkhira or Netrokona, and the process in which their economic livelihoods are being violated by way of barriers to human, goods, services and movement into the rich countries, and on the other hand by way of undue advantages in expansionary markets for the goods and services of the north.

# Goals, Objectives, Outcomes and Strategies

In the 21st century, the challenge for Bangladesh is not only to overcome the conditions of poverty, but also to promote a culture of equal citizenship where justice is the norm. To achieve this we will work at all levels and establish a strong linkages with micro-macro-global issues, processes and factors, to create influence and bring about a positive change in the lives of the poor and marginalised people. We will concentrate our work on our experience, strengthens and venture into new areas of opportunity that will have the maximum impact. Based on this premise, our goals, strategic objectives and outcomes are the following.

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## Goal I

Poor and marginalised people's rights over their livelihoods are more secure.

To achieve this goal we will concentrate our resources on the issues of livelihood promotion, risk reduction from natural and human-made disasters, to create access to natural resources that promote livelihood of the poor people and increase access to services that assist in the improvements of livelihoods of the poor. We set ourselves three strategic objectives to achieve this goal that falls under the above issues.

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### Strategic Objective 1.1:

**To facilitate an enabling environment where poor and marginalised people are able to exercise their right to sustainable livelihood through access to employment opportunities, and also able to claim their fair share from the institutions, capital and market.**

To stand by the poor and their rights, it is essential to identify, promote and protect sustainable livelihood options for the poor and marginalised groups that will ensure them a minimum dignified life so that they do not go hungry and have income options that create value both for his family and the society. For that purpose, the theme will aim at ensuring sustainable economic livelihoods with increased access to employment for the poor and marginalised people. To achieve this target, ActionAid Bangladesh will strategically engage itself in tripartite partnerships with poor and marginalised, government, and non-government institutions for a more responsive service and support to the rights holders. It will also work to improve people's capacity for livelihood skills, help them create backward and forward market linkage for a fair share of the value for the marginal producers and access to capital/loans support that enhances their enterprise. It also implies those women entrepreneurs as well as marginal professional groups and ethnic minorities will be given priority and space.

**We will endeavour to achieve the following outcomes:**

- Poor and marginalised people will enjoy sustainable livelihoods as their rights through new opportunities
- Pro-poor policies and budgets to ensure fair price and market share of their produces
- Linkage with markets backward and forward to yield greater profits to the producers.
- Existing livelihood options will be strengthened.
- Institutions, both government and NGO which provide services for livelihood promotion and support will become more responsive to the poor and marginalised.
- Increased number of women entrepreneurs, marginal professional groups and ethnic minorities are engaged in the market.

**Our Strategies will be:**

- Enhance capacities of the poor and marginalised people and their communities to expand their livelihood options, which are sustainable.
- Work with the organisations of the poor and marginalised to develop their capacity to engage with institutions in order to have access to necessary services for livelihood promotion.
- Work with organisations of the poor to develop their capacity to negotiate market access at local and national levels.
- Identify and promote women from poor and marginalised communities as entrepreneurs.
- Work towards building self-help groups of the poor and marginalised.
- Act as the organisation/ layer between grassroots and national and international level to defuse, debunk adverse impact of the national policy and practices that bar poor people's livelihood.

**Strategic Objective 1.2:**

**To reduce vulnerability and risk to the livelihood of the poor and marginalised from disasters [both human-made and natural].**

Since poor people are in most cases, either live in place that are poor area or are part of a special group, whatever income that they have, are spent on protecting their incomes; in other words they and their families are more prone than others to both human- and nature- made disasters. This theme will focus on reducing risk of the livelihood of the poor and marginalised. Its aim is to facilitate the poor and marginalised people with a better analysis of disaster related vulnerabilities and their causes, both natural and human-made and assist them to cope with the threat and effect of disasters. It will work closely with the government, NGOs and relevant institutions at the local and national level for more efficient and responsive disaster preparedness, i.e. early warning, and during emergencies, with support including relief and rehabilitation, particularly to the needs of the poor and the marginalised. Legal framework will be developed to ensure poor people's rights and claims in emergency and disaster.

**We will endeavour to achieve the following outcomes:**

- Poor and marginalised people are more capable to analyze causes of vulnerabilities related to disasters; both natural and human-made.
- Poor and marginalised people and CBOs are better prepared to resist disasters and insecurity.
- Poor and marginalised people and CBOs are more engaged with the government and NGOs for better and efficient responsiveness of various institutions in disaster and emergency.
- Institutions, both government and NGOs, are more responsive in disaster preparedness, early warning, relief and rehabilitation and specially target poor and marginalised people.
- Legal framework developed to ensure poor people's rights and claims in emergency and disaster.

**Our Strategies will be:**

- Promote capacity for analysis vulnerabilities and risks of disaster of poor and marginalised people and institutions.
- Enhance peoples' ability to cope with the impact of disasters through effective disaster preparedness measures.
- Develop networks with organisations of the poor and marginalised at national and regional level
- Promote people's engagement (People's River Commission etc.) with government institutions.
- Sensitise government organisations and relevant institutions on institutional responsiveness for risk reduction of the poor and marginalised in disaster and emergency.
- Enhance institutional engagement with ministries, parliament standing committees, civil society, organisations and parliament members to elaborate a legal frame of protection for the poor and marginalised in emergency to reduce their risk and vulnerability

**Strategic Objective 1.3:**

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**To increase access and control over natural resources and public services by the poor and marginalised.**

Poor people's sustainable livelihood options are depended on the access to natural resources and public services. They will be unable to exercise their right to livelihoods unless their accesses are ensured. Further more, the emergence of international and national polices are encroaching the public and natural spaces for them and poor people are constantly either evicted or thrown out of the environment. For this purpose, to increase Access and Control Over Natural Resources and Public Services for the poor and marginalised citizens, the theme will aim at the formation of laws and policies related to common property resources in favour of the poor and marginalised, as well as will strengthen people's movements against corporate encroachment on and control of common property resources. Social movements for accessing services such as: clean drinking water by the poor and marginalised, will be strengthened regardless of their ability to pay. These attempts will enforce the government to take measures to protect interests of the poor in negotiating public service liberalisation with bilateral and multilateral institutions.

**We will endeavour to achieve the following outcomes:**

- Laws and policies in leasing of common property resources are reformed in favour of the poor and marginalised.
- People's movements strengthened against corporate encroachment on and control of common property resources.
- Increased access to common property resources by the poor and marginalised.
- The government will make efforts to protect interests of the poor in negotiating public service liberalisation with bilateral and multilateral institutions.
- Social movements for access to services by the poor and marginalised will be strengthened.
- Poor and marginalised people in slums will have access to clean water regardless of their ability to pay.

**Our Strategies will be:**

- Revise the "Land Use Manual" of the government.
- Build partnership with organisations for promoting awareness on policies relating to common property resources.
- Influence the relevant state agencies to adopt a pro-poor position in negotiations of GATS/WTO.
- Engage with people's organisations and movements as well as relevant government institutions both locally and nationally for more responsive public services to the poor and marginalised in the slums.

## Goal II

## Women's rights are advanced for gender equality.

Our work on women's rights will concentrate on creating an enabling environment for exercising and advancing women's rights to self determination, promoting active citizenship of the adolescents and an integrated and zero tolerance approach to stop violence against women. Achieving this goal will depend on effective implementation of the following strategic objectives.

**Strategic Objective 2.1:**

**To promote women's right to self-determination and create an enabling environment for their effective participation in social, political, economic and environmental dimensions.**

The theme will promote women's right to self-determination and creates an enabling environment for her effective participation in social, economic and environmental dimensions. Policies and programmes for affirmative action in the local government institutions to promote women's leadership and active participation in societal affairs are the agenda of the theme. In achieving the objective, the theme will work to promote livelihood programme that is more women friendly and facilitates women entrepreneurship by ensuring their access to the market as producer and

consumer. This will enable women to exercise greater control over their livelihoods including IGA and micro credit. ActionAid Bangladesh's programmes will be designed to influence government in recognising women's full rights to citizenship, property and guardianship by law and practice, and raising greater awareness on budget allocation for women.

**We will endeavour to achieve the following outcomes:**

- Women are exercising greater control over their livelihoods including IGA and micro credit.
- Women's access to the market, as producer, consumer and vendor, is effectively enhanced.
- Women's full rights to citizenship recognised.
- Greater awareness on budget allocation for women in selected areas.
- Local government and institutions have policies and programmes for affirmative action to promote women's leadership and active participation in societal affairs.
- Women's right to property, guardianship are recognised in practice.

**Our Strategies will be:**

- Support and facilitate organisations of the women's movement
- All projects and programmes will take special measures to ensure gender sensitivity, women's rights and access for women.
- Livelihood programmes to be more women friendly and promote women entrepreneurs through development of their skills.
- Special efforts given to ensure women's active and continued participation as enterprises go to scale.
- Gender budget analysis at national and local level on selected issues.
- Campaign to highlight legal discrimination against women's citizenship rights.
- Promotion of women's political participation to enhance laws and entitlements in favour of women.

**Strategic Objective 2.2:**

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**To create an enabling environment for practice of egalitarian gender relations and active citizenship by adolescents.**

The Creating Adolescents Opportunities theme will work to create an enabling environment for practice of egalitarian gender relations for the adolescents so that they can be active citizens. It will engage itself with other civil society organisations and networks to stop early marriage, encourage more girls to complete primary school and enrol in secondary schools, promote sex education as an adolescent right and ensure that adolescent boys are more sensitive to discrimination against girls.

**We will endeavour to achieve the following outcomes:**

- Prevention of marriage at early adolescence
- Girls' enrolment and retention in primary and secondary school are increased.
- AFLE/Sex education is accepted as an adolescent right
- Adolescent boys are more sensitive to discrimination against girls.
- Adolescent boys and girls are serving their community and society as potential human resource.
- State recognises adolescents as future citizens considering their potentials and vulnerabilities thorough various policies and programmes.

**Our Strategies will be:**

- Awareness campaign on early marriage prevention, continuation of boys and girls education with family and community (institutions, primary school, marriage register etc.)
- Promotion of AFLE in school curriculum including primary schools and adolescent Reflect circle with dropouts and guardians.
- Development of adolescent programmes for boys and girls for practices of active citizenship and exploration of talents.
- Adolescent network of boys and girls cutting across class (although low income will be dominant)
- Promote training opportunities for development of skills for adolescent and youth to make them more employable without gender bias.
- Special measures to make schools to be more responsive to address drop out from primary and promotion of enrolment and increasing retention in secondary school.
- Address gender stereotyped notions.
- Lobby with education campaign groups/ individual to incorporate adolescent boys issue in their agenda.
- Advocacy with concerned government authority and other stakeholders for a policy on adolescent to be adopted.

**Strategic Objective 2.3:**

**To promote a culture of zero tolerance for violence against women.**

This theme will engage itself to promote a culture of zero tolerance for violence against women and its prevention and address the problem at its cultural roots. Furthermore, communities will be targeted to raise greater awareness to realise that violence against women is wrong and necessary action will be taken to prevent wife abuse. Reflect will be used as a tool for attitude change and work with a variety of NGOs and women's organisations will be initiated to build up a referral network for services to ensure easy access to justice for rape and acid survivors and make the community supportive towards survivors of acid violence and rape.

**We will endeavour to achieve the following outcomes:**

- Community is aware that violence against women specially wife abuse is wrong/unacceptable practice.
- Community is supportive towards survivors of acid violence and rape.
- Easier access to justice for victims of violence especially family violence, acid violence sexual harassment (i.e. rape, teasing, work place harassment etc).
- Rape and acid survivors are not stigmatised.
- Community awareness on sexual harassment and its constraining impact on women's mobility and job aspirations
- Adoption of policies against sexual harassment in public and private institutions.
- International campaign on acid violence.

**Our Strategies will be:**

- Sensitisation of family members including the elderly on violence against women.
- Sensitisation of community through Reflect.
- Linking with legal aid, health services, law enforcement agencies and journalists with partners to ensure easier access to justice for rape and acid survivors.
- Platforms of and for survivors through people's organisations (Lokokendra), SVAW network and its national body.
- ActionAid International platform for campaign issue on violence against women.
- Policy advocacy with concerned state bodies to ensure justice for the victims of violence and survivors.

## Goal III

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**Development of a socially inclusive culture where diversity is celebrated, equal citizenship exercised, and non-discrimination is actively practiced.**

Interventions of AAB will be centred around the thought of realising basic rights and the social justice for the poor and marginalised. Concentrating on the issues of equal citizenship by those of diverse origins, promoting and inclusive and barrier free conducive environment for the people with disability and activating an inclusive process for the socially marginalised, stigmatised people, AAB will focus on the following strategic objectives to materialise this goal.

**Strategic Objective 3.1:**


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**To assert equal citizenship by those of diverse origins based on ethnicity, language and religion.**

The Diversity and Citizenship theme will assert equal citizenship by those of diverse origins based on ethnicity, language and religion. The theme will work to enhance the capacity of the local organisations working with ethnic and minority groups so that they are more able to reduce poverty, marginalisation and vulnerability of the minority sections of Bangladesh. Efforts will be put to practice their diverse and secular culture as norm. Emphasis will be on government policies, facilities and services related to education, land distribution, health services and financing and make those more conducive and responsive to the needs and demands of diverse marginalised ethnic and linguistic communities so that grassroots realities are heard at the policy making level.

**We will endeavour to achieve the following outcomes:**

- Identity and dignity of the excluded community recognised.
- Primary education for the children from diverse ethnic and linguistic background is ensured.
- Strengthened sustainable livelihood options for diverse marginalised ethnic, linguistic and religious communities.
- Government more responsive towards resolving constitutional ambiguity towards indigenous people.
- Indigenous people enjoy rights to their own land.
- Strengthened sustainable livelihood options for diverse marginalised ethnic, linguistic and religious communities.
- People of diverse and minority communities take leadership of their own development.
- Government health facilities are more responsive to the needs of minority communities.
- Peace and harmony between the dominant and ethnic culture established at least in the areas where we work.

**Our Strategies will be:**

- Promote multilingual education in pre-school and primary level.
- Work with organisations of diverse marginalised ethnic communities to improve their capacity to engage with government institutions to access services and benefits.
- Build networks, coalitions at the local, national and international level to influence to policy-making bodies to advance the rights of the diverse marginalised ethnic communities.
- Work with the organisations of diverse marginalised ethnic communities for sustainable livelihood.
- Campaign for protection of the rights over common property resources by diverse marginalised ethnic and linguistic communities.

### **Strategic Objective 3.2:**

**To promote an inclusive and barrier free society where enabling environment and conditions prevail for the people with disabilities.**

The theme will work to promote an inclusive and barrier free society where enabling environment and conditions prevail for the persons with disabilities. The theme will take initiatives so that policies and laws are adopted and implemented for the people with disabilities [PWDs] and resources at the local level are allocated adequately for their empowerment and establishment of their rights inclusive of recognition of the right to education for children with disability; both at the grassroots and national levels. The theme will organise necessary steps to make disability an inclusive agenda of the development agencies and the elite and at the same time sensitise and integrate corporate social responsibility for the interests of PWDs to make the issues of CWDs, WWDs and mental retardation more clear and visible.

#### **We will endeavour to achieve the following outcomes:**

- Partner Organisations shifted their approach from a need based approach (NBA), which is dominated primarily by the medical model to rights based approach (RBA) i.e. social model.
- Strong platforms established at various levels advocating policy shifts in favour of PWDs who are socially excluded.
- Increased corporate social responsibilities serving interests of PWDs.
- Political and administrative barriers that hinder the advancement of PWDs slacken off.
- Number of partner NGOs increased with disability-inclusive programme plan;
- “Disability” has been adopted as an inclusive agenda of the development agencies, of the CSOs, of the intelligentsia and of civic movements in Bangladesh.
- Campaign for specific rights issues of the PWDs (non-discrimination, positive action for the PWDs etc.) launched by NGOs, GoB, Corporate and Civic Organisations;
- Issues of CWDs, WWDs, intellectual disabilities, and mental illness have been taken into consideration by the development agencies, institutions, policy makers and state machineries.
- Dominant poverty discourse, which exclude the issues of PWDs, has been challenged by a visible, knowledge-based movement of the PWDs;
- Increased number of “Friends” of PWDs.

#### **Our Strategies will be:**

- Enhance critical engagement through partnership and outreach initiatives (indirect partnership) with the key stakeholders promoting human rights of people with disabilities.
- Build a strong micro-macro linkage of disability work that advocates in favour of a poverty alleviation agenda recognising PWDs as a social category under chronic poverty.
- Engage with the individuals (ambassadors and vanguards), with activist groups, NGOs, CBOs, CSOs, Corporate, Networks, Alliances, and Forums to create a level playing field for the PWDs.
- Enhance engagement on hardcore issues of disability especially on the issues of Women with Disabilities and Children with Disabilities.
- Initiate/ promote/ enhance advocacy initiatives both at local and in national levels towards the adoption of an “Inclusive Policy & Planning” by the agencies working in the development sector in Bangladesh.
- Initiate/ enhance the grassroots and national levels campaigns intended to promote positive image of the PWDs, to establish fairness and non-discrimination, social justice, social inclusion and a barrier-free environment.

**Strategic Objective 3.3:****To promote active processes for inclusion of the socially excluded.**

The theme will work to promote active processes for inclusion of the socially marginalised and stigmatised to ensure the existence of a more responsive environment to accept the socially excluded groups in the mainstream of the societal activities. It will work to facilitate process of the legal and institutional instruments that will influence the work to protect rights of people infected with and affected by HIV/AIDS, victims of trafficking, and enhance social mobilisation and responsiveness, for prevention of trafficking and sex workers human rights. AAB and partners will directly work to strengthen their capacity to raise their voice and enhance their advocacy skills, accept and serve them with due respect in institutions such as schools, hospitals and social gathering and institutionalise care.

**We will endeavour to achieve the following outcomes:**

- Socially excluded groups are accepted and served with due respect in institutions such as schools, hospital and social gathering etc.
- Legal and institutional instruments are in place to protect the human rights of the sex workers, victims of trafficking and other socially excluded people.
- Social mobilisation and institutional responsiveness for prevention of trafficking is enhanced.
- Victims of trafficking are more easily reintegrated in society.
- Opportunities for safe migration are increased.
- People are more aware of the issues related to HIV/AIDS and prevention.
- Care, treatment and support for HIV positive people are institutionalised and accessible.
- Standard guidelines for working conditions and treatment of Bangladeshi women working as domestic helpers are recognised.

**Our Strategies will be:**

- Promote the process of inclusion for socially marginalised and stigmatised groups by addressing the root causes of exclusion.
- Sensitise the government and service providing institutions to become more responsive to the needs of people who are socially marginalised and stigmatised.
- Promote effective collaborations among marginalised communities and groups with the mainstream and key actors to address the issues of human rights and discrimination at local, national and international levels.
- Support legal aid organisations to fight discrimination based on stigma.
- Promote awareness on trafficking and the risks of undocumented travel across borders.
- Support programmes for social reintegration of victims of trafficking.
- Campaign for removal of legal and social restrictions on people's, particularly women's mobility and travel across borders.
- Facilitate initiatives for safe migration.
- Campaign for promotion of awareness on HIV and prevention, including universal precaution and care and support for HIV positive people.
- Promote awareness on exploitative working conditions of domestic workers and create a social consensus on their rights and guidelines for working conditions.

## Goal IV

# People's movements for social and economic justice are strengthened.

Bringing positive changes for realising social and economic justice for the vulnerable and marginalised people will require a concerted effort at different levels of programme interventions. AAB strongly realises the need for addressing the direct as well as the root causes of inequity and injustice. It also realises the importance of strengthening its drive to promote quality education for the poor, enhancing public responsiveness of different stakeholders that secures economic justice and quality health care. It envisaged the following strategies will be adopted in advancing the goal of people's movement for social and economic justice.

### **Strategic Objective 4.1:**

**To promote the right to “quality education” for the poor and marginalised children.**

Education not only increases productivity of human beings or emancipates them from illiteracy: thus turning them into quality human resource, but also it integrates them with institutions and other groups. This is a positive way of ensuring public life for the poor and creating enormous social capital for them. The theme will work based on the understanding that ensuring quality education for all is the responsibility of the state. But, usually, the poor do not have proper access to the services, and if they have, the quality of services rendered is satisfactory. 'Quality Education' theme, thus, will promote the right to 'quality education' for the poor and marginalised. It will assist in the process to recognise and claim quality education as a fundamental right by mass people to ensure that the children have increased their access to and completion of 'quality education' irrespective of sex, class and ethnicity. Necessary steps will be taken to make the education system more responsive to the context specific needs of the children and community, promote disaster resilient education system at grassroots level, enhance community state interface through sustained state alliance and changes will be duly made in the curriculum and schooling time. To achieve these outcomes the theme aims to embark on the path of legislative advocacy to enshrine education as a constitutionally mandated fundamental right and along with its partners, will enhance capacity of communities for better education policy literacy and monitoring.

### **We will endeavour to achieve the following outcomes:**

- Quality education claimed as a fundamental right by mass people
- Children irrespective of sex, class and ethnicity have increased access to education.
- Increase the proportion of children, especially girls, completing primary education.
- Education service is demand-driven and responsive to the context specific educational needs of the students and the community
- Disaster resilient education system at the grassroots level promoted
- Community-State interface enhanced through sustained people's alliance

### **Our Strategies will be:**

- Legislative Advocacy to enshrine education as a fundamental right.
- Capacity building and mobilisation of communities for better education policy literacy, formulation, enactment, implementation and monitoring.
- Alliance building and networking for micro-macro linkage in education through demand-driven and people centred policy advocacy.
- Policy Analysis for addressing quality, equity, relevance and perspective of education.
- Undertaking action research to promote innovative and pragmatic practices to enhance and strengthen the mainstream education system.

**Strategic Objective 4.2:**


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**To promote public accountability of the government, private sector and international development agencies that secures economic justice for all.**

The role of international financial institutions must be assessed in the context of poverty promotion in Bangladesh. These institutions that work to promote the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), have recently shifted their focus on pro-poor growth, but at the same time their complementary activities offset the very goals they purportedly seek to achieve. Additionally, these organisations work as the signalling agent for other development organisations, which determines where the other bilateral and multilateral development agencies will work. They also dictate governments on the most important macroeconomic policies that help multi-national corporations to penetrate in the local market and destroy the development of the local industrialisation process. Based on the understanding, the theme will to promote public accountability of the government, private sector and international development agencies and promote economic justice for all to ensure poor people's right to participate and reap due share in the economy at local, national and global levels. As such, the theme will focus on a number of key areas: secure entitlements for the poor and marginalised through networks and associations, ensure regulated markets and provide opportunity to small producers for adequate access in local, national and international markets of the least developed countries, initiate campaigns to establish their right to work and fair wages for agricultural labourers to meet basic needs of their family and foster a set of policies at the macro level which are home-grown and appropriate to national context.

**We will endeavour to achieve the following outcomes:**

- Networks and associations of the poor are mobilised to secure entitlements, right to work and fair wages necessary for meeting the basic needs of the family.
- Collective movement is strengthened against corporate control over food and denial of people's right through large-scale projects, and structural adjustment.
- Alternative development ideas and practices promoted that challenge existing paradigms.
- Local, national and international markets provide adequate access to small producers in least developed countries.
- National policies on agriculture, food security, employment and workers rights are more pro-poor.
- Multilateral and bilateral trade rules benefit the poor of Bangladesh as well as the least developed countries.

#### **Our Strategies will be:**

- Develop capacity and awareness of the poor and marginalised farmers, fisher folk associations, agricultural labourers and other groups of poor.
- Build alliances and networks to strengthen movements against policies and practices at local, national and international levels that cause food insecurity and injustice.
- Influence government, regional bodies and multilateral institutions to enact policies that benefit the poor, specifically for least developed countries.
- Work with media to raise awareness on international financial institutions and their stronghold over national policies
- Work with youth societies and women's groups in raising awareness on gender and trade, corporate control and the impositions<sup>9</sup> of international financial institutions.
- Develop skills and capacity of local organizations to engage in meaningful participatory research on the extent, causes and ramifications of economic injustice.

#### **Strategic Objective 4.3:**

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#### **To promote the right to quality health care for the poor and marginalised.**

Based on the current experience and expertise of AAB and the partners, 'Quality Health' theme focuses to promote the right to quality health care for the poor and marginalised. With a view to addressing the above-mentioned issue, the theme works in health governance to increase accountability of health service providers to the poor and the marginalised through a process of interaction between service providers and receivers. More concentration will be on coercive practices on reproductive health care particularly for contraceptive use and maternal health among the local and the national level stakeholders. AAB would engage with existing processes to highlight and counter shrinking government role in the health sector and growing influence of the private sector so that people's monitoring of the Health, Nutrition and Population Sector Programme (HNPS) is developed/improved.

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<sup>9</sup> This refers to those conditionalities of IFIs that further poverty in the countries where they are imposed and undermine national sovereignty.

**We will endeavour to achieve the following outcomes:**

- Accountability of health service providers to the community, especially the poor and marginalised is increased.
- Coercive practices in reproductive health care, particularly for contraceptive use and maternal health have reduced.
- Increased awareness on health and well-being for women and men.
- People's monitoring of the Health, Nutrition and Population Sector Programme (HNPSP) is developed.
- Increased appropriate and accurate use of indigenous medicine and therapy.

**Our Strategies will be:**

- Strengthening the existing government health services to be more responsive.
- Promotion of indigenous health knowledge and ethno-medicine systems
- Promotion of reproductive and sexual health rights.
- Campaign on policy issues for promotion of public health and against policies and practices harmful for people's health.

# Organisational Objectives

The new strategic objectives have necessitated some organisational readjustments. Our new direction focusing on thematic issues have implications on the organisational structure, culture and on work processes internally as well as with the partners. This new direction will require staff who are able to handle new challenges and for which the organisation needs to invest in staff capacity building. We also need to develop a system to better understand how we are achieving our objectives and goals. In order to do that, we need to share our learning among the themes and also devote sufficient resources to understand and measure the achievements. As more and more official funding is coming into AAB, we need to build capacity of the existing staff or we need to bring in staff with experience of handling projects. A different mindset and a culture of operation within AAB staff are necessary to implement the changes that this CSP has put forward.

## Organisational Objective 1: **Promote Effective Organisational Culture.**

CSP II review indicated that compliance deviations, lack of professionalism, un-uniformity in the process of decision making, resistance to change and poor interpersonal communication among staff have affected the organisation negatively. For the CSP III period, AAB will promote a culture based on Openness, Confrontation, Trust, Authenticity, Pro-Action, Autonomy, Collaboration and Experimentation (OCTAPACE) to create an environment of trust and openness. Furthermore, it will introduce mechanisms for common sharing of issues, which are expected to achieve improved togetherness leading to more motivation, conviction, commitment, innovation and professional excellence.

## Organisational Objective 2:

### Promote Human Resource development system which continuously addresses the needs and updates the capacities of staff.

The findings of CSP-II review was that “Human resource development and capacity building function lack a core focus and is also fragmented across several units” have obliged AAB to strengthen its HR department and systems for improvement of human resources capacity. HR will continuously identify and develop core competencies of each professional, so that they are able to realise their realistic individual career path. AAB's thematic structure invariably puts the staff in a position where they have to take on collective responsibility as well as individual. Staff job descriptions and annual performance appraisal process will be tuned to address these issues through the linkages between JD and Plans and Budget by identifying annual Key Result Areas (KRA) with Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). This will have a positive influence in creating second and third generation of leaders within AAB.

The recruitment process will be reviewed and emphasis will be taken for competency-based recruitment. The HR will take on the role of formal and informal counselling and mentoring, so that staff can enjoy the work environment and feel empowered.

AAB will be equally sensitive for capacity building initiatives for AAB partners and offer training, workshop, induction, sharing of best practices, secondment, exposure, counselling and mentoring.

## Organisational Objective 3:

### Promote Gender Equity and Equality.

AAB recognises that women's condition and position need to be improved in the society at large including at the workplace. In line with its values mentioned earlier, AAB will improve gender equity and equality within its own work environment. Training and policies will guide the staff members to be more gender sensitive within the organisation and establish gender sensitive work environment. AAB will also update/review its various policies to cater to the increased need of gender equity in terms of recruitment, training opportunities and promotions etc. Developing women leadership for higher positions within the organisation will add to the instruments. Lastly, AAB will also introduce gender auditing in all plans, strategies and policies and replicate such practices among partner organisations.

## Organisational Objective 4:

# Nurture shared learning and establish a system of knowledge management to promote institutional memory and greater synergy of our work.

The current structure will be a challenge for creating an environment for shared learning as the sectors cannot function in isolation. The partners' own objectives will not be confined to only one sector or even theme. So, there has to be a collaborative effort between the sectors and themes and here the shared learning environment becomes vital to the whole implementation process. The following are some processes that will be looked into for ensuring that shared learning takes place:

- In order to bring about a change in the way we look at shared learning a conscious effort will be taken to bring staff together to discuss their experiences and challenges of various works.
- Horizontal working relations will be promoted among staff to provide guidance to the DA planning process.
- Best practices of shared learning will be documented and efforts will be made to replicate these best practices.

On the other hand knowledge is a fluid mix of framed experience, values, contextual information, expert insights & intuition that provides an environment & framework for evaluating & incorporating new experiences & information. Emphasis will be given for knowledge creation, knowledge acquisition & knowledge application & knowledge replication. Using knowledge management (KM), we will lead change so that change does not lead us. KM will help us to know “what we know” & “what we do not know”. It will facilitate us in decision-making, dynamic learning, strategic planning & problem solving. This process will also protect our intellectual assets from decay and will cater to the critical issue of organisational adaptation, survival & competence in the face of increasingly discontinuous change.

## Organisational Objective 5: “Commitment towards monitoring and evaluation for better understanding of the changes in the lives of poor and marginalised”

AAB over the past couple of years has tried to look at changes from an impact perspective. In doing so, it has sometimes lost focus on the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the programmes, which would have helped in better understanding of ongoing changes, thus improving the implementation process. To quote from the CSP II review document:

“... The weakness here are two fold: there is a serious absence of effective and meaningful indicators through which programme impact on poverty and empowerment can be measured and understood..... The weakness here is not of the impact unit alone but also of a larger organisational weakness”.

This weakness has hampered the process of taking “informed decisions” by the managers. In order to improve the decision making process of the managers and also to understand better the ongoing changes, emphasis will be given to developing monitoring and evaluation systems. This will be done at two levels i.e. for AAB and for the partner organisations.

At the AAB level this will necessitate the development of benchmarks for each CSP strategic objectives with specific indicators. Also each sector and themes will develop an operational plan for the CSP period with benchmarks/indicators.

And at the partners level this will entail developing strategies as per ALPS and subsequently PIFA<sup>10</sup> for all the DAs and also for the Non DA partners with whom we will work at least for three years. AAB will endeavour to develop partners' capacity in monitoring and evaluation.

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<sup>10</sup> Planning and Implementation Framework Analysis (PIFA).

## Organisational Objective 6: Establish national accountability in light of internationalisation”

Internationalisation of ActionAid entails that AAB anchors its accountability to a national board. During the first two years of this CSP, AAB will endeavour to build a national board that is effective in guiding the work of AAB and holding it accountable.

AAB understands that there are risks involved with procuring national registration. There is a very real risk, given the organisational culture in Bangladesh, of developing a titular board and domination of vested interest groups. Thus this process will be pursued carefully and due attention will be given to all the organisational objectives of ActionAid International.

Furthermore, to increase the internal accountability of running the organisation, a two tier management team is proposed i.e. senior management team and extended management team. Senior management team will consist of the most senior managers and will represent a collective leadership of AAB and the extended management team will consist of both the senior leaders and mid level staff to promote leadership and participation in the decision making process.

## Organisational Objective 7:

**“ Allocate resources at the optimum level for cost effectiveness and ensure financial transparency”**

A resource management strategy will be developed which will help establish better control over inflow & outflow of resources. Programme -finance collaboration will be enhanced in both formal and informal ways and financial information sharing will also be formalised. Introducing a system of evaluating investment of AAB's resources and have the system guide our resource allocation mechanism will be instrumental for strengthening financial transparency and cost effectiveness. Cross fertilization of issues relating to finance and programmeme will be done on a regular basis for nurturing/promoting better understanding of programmeme-finance interface.

We will endeavour to improve our partners' financial capacity and transparency. They will be motivated to look at the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of the AAB funded programmes. Our finance unit will now develop capacity of the partner finance staff through “on-the-job” coaching and mentoring.

## Organisational Objective 8:

**Raise sufficient resources and effectively manage the resources to be efficient, effective and transparent”**

Raising adequate resources and managing those resources effectively is instrumental in providing support to expanding programme interventions of AAB. Different avenues will be explored to generate fund. Especially theme specific fund raising initiative will be strengthened to identify potential donors and developing new innovative projects. AAB will develop a sound and strong funding planning mechanism for improved forecasting of future income growth and will also diversify sources of income to include the combination of sponsorship, bi-lateral and multi-lateral bodies, trusts, contracts and corporations having values that do not confront with the values and operational approaches of ActionAid Bangladesh. We will look into the possibility of raising funds from Diaspora groups in northern and developed countries.

# How do we do it? Who we work with? Where we work?

## How to do it?

CSP III will be implemented during the period of 2005 - 2009. The organisation has been restructured in order to meet the objectives of the new CSP. Each and every part of the organisation has been entrusted with achieving at least one strategic objective and the organisational objectives. This will encourage cross-thematic / cross sector work. To make this happen, AAB has set up mechanisms to encourage participatory decision-making and promote leadership. The decentralisation process within this CSP has a two-tier process, i.e. the Senior Management Team (SMT) and the second tier of management, i.e. Extended Management Team (EMT). The SMT is mandated to take decision on strategic and organisational issues. EMT has the mandate to assist SMT on programmatic and partnership issues and also provide inputs, so that SMT decides better on strategic and organisational issues.

At a later stage of this CSP, AAB is expected to select a national board of advisers in accordance with the internationalisation process of ActionAid International.

## Where to work?

AAB will work throughout Bangladesh, particularly in the extreme poverty-stricken areas. It recognises that pockets of distress and poverty exist everywhere. Geographically remote and ecologically vulnerable areas will get preference. The idea is to find a place where AAB can make the greatest difference.

## Who to work with?

AAB will collaborate with all potential people to bring about improvement of lives for the poor and marginalised. The socially excluded urban and rural poor will be targeted thereby emphasising women and women's organisations, people with disabilities, people of diverse ethnic, linguistic and religious backgrounds and their organisations, and with people living with HIV/AIDS.

# How to measure the achievements of CSP objectives?

The CSP II review showed that measurement of achievements against the CSP objectives was not fully possible. Therefore, AAB plans to develop and introduce systems to register changes in the lives of the poor and marginalised people.

The proposed M&E system is expected to apply at AAB and partner's level. AAB will include development of effective and relevant indicators (quantitative and qualitative) for all thematic objectives and devising a suitable monitoring framework to measure the CSP III impacts. It will assist the partners in introducing an M&E system, so that they can take informed decisions. AAB will extensively use Planning and Implementation Framework Analysis (PIFA) developed during CSP II to design the M&E systems for the DAs. The non-DAs will receive similar assistance from AAB.

ALPS will be the guiding document and the core elements of ALPS will be followed at the all levels. Special attention will be given to developing strategies and conducting reviews for DAs.

Four measures will support the M&E process. First, AAB will conduct annual Participatory Review and Reflection Process (PRRP). Second, relevant staff members will undertake field visits to be ended with a short report and sharing on special learning. Third, AAB will conduct a Mid Term Review (MTR) of this CSP during July - December 2007 to assess the progress. Fifth, a comprehensive review of the CSP during the period of July December 2009 will be fielded to support the development of the next CSP.

The donor funding is on the increase but it requires increased and rigorous monitoring and evaluation. Successful M&E tasks will in turn presuppose capacity building both at AAB and partner level.

# Annex 1: Restructuring

When ActionAid first started its operations in Bangladesh, it focussed narrowly on the community in immediate need. Indeed for the first ten years of its existence in Bangladesh, it focussed on gaining knowledge and insight on community work in experimenting with models of microfinance, entrepreneurship, education, adult learning, people's organisations and women's empowerment. The next decade saw an attempt to replicate positive experiences in other areas and also to learn about the geographical diversity and specificity. AAB focussed on effective partnerships and expansion of its work nationally. This period also saw the beginning of work on advocacy and the introduction of the rights-based approach. During this decade, AAB's volume of work, funds and staffing grew exponentially. Now in its third decade, AAB has significantly increased its income through official fund-raising. It is promoting the rights-based approach through strategic interventions at the community level and bridging the micro and macro through its advocacy initiatives. During this period, there is greater engagement, both critical and constructive, with the government, international agencies and the private sector.

These changes have called for different organisational architecture at different times. Following the external CSP review and the peer review, AAB set up a participatory internal process for preparation of CSP III. This started with the preparations of the Annual Review and Reflection Process which took place in March, 2004. During this time we focussed on the programme areas in which AAB had done considerable work, and tried to learn from its lessons. This lay the foundation for the future direction of our work and CSP III. It was also apparent that in order to change the way we do things, a message that came loudly through the different reviews, we had to change the way we were organised.

After series of several open discussions with staff, particularly staff working in programme operations, we decided to dissolve the regional structure that had been implemented during CSP II. Firstly, we had never managed to fully implement regionalisation as key staff were not willing to move. Secondly, AAB is not an implementing organisation, so its regional presence would largely enhance mobilisation of local civil society for purposes of advocacy. We recognised that through our during CSP II, we had established partnerships with organisations who were better able to perform the role of catalyst. Hence, what was required was our support and not necessarily our presence. Thirdly, policy decisions are centralised in Bangladesh and we needed a stronger presence in the capital to pursue the various agenda both for policy and to influence programmatic interventions of the government and other NGOs. Fourthly, we needed to increase our staff capacity for policy advocacy. Thus we took the decision collectively to merge the policy and operational functions and reorganise the AAB programme into a thematic structure. We decided to embark on the thematic structure for the interim period, until we finalised the new CSP.

Accordingly, we formulated three sectors during the interim period which were led by sector heads. Under each sector, there were three themes. These are summarised as below:

Sectors	Livelihood Security & Risk Reduction	Rights & Social Justice	Social Development & Economic Justice
<b>Themes</b>			
1.	Livelihood Promotion	Diversity & Citizenship	Education
2.	Emergency	Disability	Economic Justice
3.	Natural Resources and Public Services	Social Exclusion	Gender Equality & Equity

Each theme is led by a Theme Leader and the Sector Head also leads a Theme. As we worked on CSP III, we recognised that further changes in the structure are necessary which have been planned as follows:

Sectors	Livelihood Security & Risk Reduction	Women's Rights & Gender Equality	Rights & Social Justice	Social Development & Economic Justice
<b>Themes</b>				
1.	Livelihood Promotion	Women's Rights	Diversity & Citizenship	Education
2.	Emergency	Adolescent & Youth	Disability	Economic Justice
3.	Natural Resources and Public Services	Violence against Women	Social Exclusion	Health

These are aligned so that they correspond to the Goals and Strategic Objectives for CSP III. This new structure has opened up the possibilities for greater collaboration across themes and sectors. Moreover, it has made possible the programmatic and analytical micro-macro linkage.

These changes were foreseen earlier and necessitated the abolition of the post of Operations Director which was dissolved from April 1, 2004. The interim structure was made effective from May 16, 2004.

In addition, from May 16, 2004, the Capacity Building Unit (CBU), which had been set up in 2002 to impart training to partner organisations, was dissolved. It was felt that the centralisation of partner's training was ineffective as generic packages were offered.

Discussion with partners also revealed that it would be more useful to have provisions for training for partner organisations so that they could access the trainings that they needed rather than receive canned packages from AAB. However, on specific issues, such as finance and sponsorship, AAB continues to provide specialised training which is provided by the respective units or functions in AAB and does not require a separate structure of CBU. The CBU manager has subsequently been made redundant and other staff of the unit absorbed elsewhere.

In 2003, the Financial Monitoring and Capacity Building Unit, was made reportable to the Country Director. In May, 2004, this was renamed Internal Audit Unit, was brought under the purview of the CD's department. Financial capacity building was removed from the function. Rather, internal audit has a larger dimension. This unit is headed by a manager.

The Impact Assessment Unit was redefined into Impact Assessment and Shared Learning (IASL) department with two units. One is Monitoring & Evaluation Unit. Many tasks of the IAU have been incorporated into this unit. There will be a greater emphasis on programme monitoring and effectiveness in the future. This comes as a lesson for the need considering the impact as well as regular process monitoring to understand better the factors involved in change as well as provide management with insights for programme improvement. The formation of this unit is coherent with the strategy for seeking greater official funding for the thematic priorities of AAB. A second new unit has been set up for Shared Learning. This includes a central resource centre. IASL will be lead by a Head.

The Reflect Coordination Unit (RCU), which was set up to support the DfID project on participatory education and empowerment, is in the process of transformation into the Reflect Development Unit (RDU). The main function of this unit will be to develop Reflect as an operating system and tailor it to the various programmatic needs through action research and training. Currently it is in transition, but it is expected that this will be led by a Coordinator. This is also under the CD's unit.

There are three departments to support the mission related activities of ActionAid Bangladesh. These are: Identity and Resource Mobilisation (IRM), Finance and Administration (Fin & Admin) and Human Resources, Organisational Development and Information Technology (HR-OD & IT).

The HR Department now includes IT led by a head. OD has been recognised as an overall responsibility of the organisation to be led by the CD and the senior management team. The HR-OD & IT is involved in Human Resources Management, supervises the IT unit which provides computer and internet support to all staff and works closely with the CD and the Senior Management Team for promoting organisational development.

The Identity and Resource Mobilisation (IRM) Department has been functioning well and will continue to be led by a Head. IRM serves as the gatekeeper for fund flows to ActionAid Bangladesh and is involved in fund-raising, donor servicing, sponsorship management and identity.

Finance and Administration Department is being led by a Head. The Administration part is being led by a Manager. The restructuring of programme has led to a merger of all the three offices and finance has accordingly been merged together in one office. This removes additional costs and work

which has freed up time to cope with the additional volume of work as AAB expands. Fin & Admin serves as the gatekeeper for AAB's expenditure and financial integrity. The admin unit provides logistic and protocol support.

AAB currently implements about 15 projects with official funds. These are implemented through the respective themes. In fact currently, IRM works with the theme leaders and sector heads for fundraising in thematic programme areas to ensure that the organisation has the funds necessary to pursue the strategic objectives.

In addition to the formal structure of the organisation, there is now a Senior Management Team, which includes all heads of departments and sector heads and CD. This is the principle decision making body for the organisation. The SMT meets every two weeks. There is an Extended Management Team (EMT), which includes the SMT and all theme leaders and nominees from each department and unit. The EMT is the major platform for discussion and debate for the organisation, and serves as a forum for leadership development. The EMT meets every two months.

# Annex 2:

## Building on the Past

AAB during the past 20 years of its existence in Bangladesh has gone through many critical experiences and learning that has enriched its programmes and its staff to perform better at fighting poverty together with the people that matter the most. This journey has taken AAB to a different understanding of poverty than it started off with. The understanding that poverty is multifaceted and perpetuates from the denial of rights of the poor and marginalised people has forced AAB to change its approach from a relief/welfare approach to work in a Rights Based Approach (RBA). This annex in CSP III is devoted to tracing those turning points so that we are able to logically extend it into our future dream and give due recognition to the efforts of the people who has worked so hard to bring AAB to its present position.

**Evolution of AAB Country Strategy Paper:** The first country strategy paper (CSP) of AAB was formulated for the period of 1994 to 1998 and the second one was for 1999 to 2003. Initiation of development of Country Strategy Paper III started at the mid of 2003 through reviewing the earlier CSP-II. An intensive internal consultation process was launched involving all levels of AAB staff with the external facilitation. Another component was consultation with stakeholders including partner organisations, communities with whom AAB works, relevant government and donor representatives, other INGOs and peers from other ActionAid Country programme.

During 1983-1994 when no CSP was in place, AAB tried hard to get “things right” by designing and implementing integrated programmes centred on strong savings and credit component in three development areas (DA) directly assisting over 25,000 poor families. Other components of the programmes were water and sanitation, immunisation, preventive healthcare, formal and non-formal educational support and working with disabled people.

During the period of CSP - I (1994-1998), AAB developed broad strategic approaches for programme implementation which included working with other institutions, the government, networking, advocacy, identification and promotion of special issues, research and policy work as well as direct implementation through the DAs. To implement CSP - I, AAB invested in staff development, information management and exchange with the broader ActionAid sphere. CSP - I period saw the expansion of work in volume through direct implementation and partnership. During this period some engagement was also seen in thematic areas such as disability.

CSP II (1999-2003) coincided with the beginning of AA's global strategy "Fighting Poverty Together (1998-2003)" that was subsequently extended to 2005. In keeping with AA's global philosophy, AAB in CSP - II, concentrated on strengthening and diversification of partnerships, started working more on campaigns and policy work by trying to establish micro - macro linkages. Internally AAB launched the process of regionalisation of its structure for better implementation of its work.

At the beginning of 2002, an updated version of CSP II was developed. It put emphasis on working only through partnerships and direct implementation was phased out. The CSP - II update also called for building organisational and managerial capacity of small NGOs and civil society organisation. This was time when AAB ventured into the Rights Based Approach for implementation of its work. This update also identified priority sectors, geographical focus and priority groups of people to work with.

Learning from CSP II programmatic approach and intervention has many dimensions. Here we would like to concentrate on some of the leanings. On the approach we will be concentrating on Partnerships, Reflect, RBA and Regionalisation and later on the programmatic intervention. We will focus on the six strategic objectives of the CSP II update.

**Partnership:** AAB has certainly been successful in broadening its partnership frame. While its primary focus is on local NGOs, it has also established partnership with civil society organisation, NGO coalition/forum, thematic networks, individual resource persons, business houses and government agencies. During this period, AAB had a varied range of partners described below:

- Long term partners i.e. Development Areas (DA)
- Thematic partnership (one-off support) mostly focused on campaign and advocacy issues
- Technical assistance partnership through Reflect project with short term non-DA partners) and
- Issue-based coalition/network partnership.

During this time, we have also piloted the “cluster partnership approach” for DA implementation to achieve greater impact and constituency building.

**Reflect:** AAB's *Reflect* approach provides a more open and inclusive space to develop awareness and better articulation of problems and search for solutions as well. It has better potential to bring out the new social problem and needs, which rarely surface through traditional micro-credit samities/associations.

Reflect's formulation as a literacy programme carries in-built limitations for exploring its larger potential. In many instances, it is being implemented simply as a one-off programme rather than a methodology to systematically open up new action frontiers. Reflect implementation also appear to suffer from inadequacy in providing any realistic sense of the resource to address the variety of practical needs identified through circle deliberation. During CSP-II period, AAB has understood that Reflect has the potential:

**a.** To build/rebuild poor people's skill and assets that empower them to recognise their rights and identify the sources of denial, furthermore identify issues and strategies for collective action. These processes and understanding are magnified if methodological innovations such as “Pot songs” are used in demanding services from the government institutions and unveiling corruptions in government institutions.

**b.** To be used as a tool for issue based mobilisation of the poor and marginalised, such as, to mobilise the excluded and marginalised professional groups to fight against market exploitation; empower adolescent to speak out about their rights against rape, trafficking, acid throwing, criminalisation of adolescent boys for political abuse; create effective gender-conscious spouse/guardian forum, who can actively participate in different action point implementation.

**Rights-Based Approach (RBA):** AAB faced major challenges in operationalising RBA as two perceptions in RBA implementation emerged. *Firstly*, it was perceived that rights and service were mutually exclusive concepts so that a shift to RBA meant an abandonment of service delivery all together and the *second* perception was that the focus on rights was essentially about awareness-building so that a shift to RBA meant the intervention should be more focused on seminar/workshop type of activities. But gradually it became clear that service delivery is the entry-point/key component to initiate RBA and without adopting the holistic understanding of denial of rights, RBA can not be implemented<sup>11</sup>. Services are essential and strategically important for changing institutions and securing rights. Even after asserting rights (for example: land rights) there may be practical needs of another service package in order to ensure that benefits of rights are harvested by the poor and marginalised citizens.

**Regionalisation:** In 1998, AAB felt that it need to be strategically located nearer to action i.e. implementation point, for better programme development and alliance building and for a more effective understanding of the ground realities of poverty. In 1999, operation department was divided into four regional setups: South-west, Central, North and South-east region. An area of tension became evident when each region was given a lead role in a specific campaign theme. Campaign had in some instances came at the expense of the core DA work (partner management) as there was no clear role-clarification, it ultimately hampered both DA and campaign work. In CSP II review process, three significant conclusions were drawn from the regionalisation experience. They were:

- Regionalisation has been a half-hearted effort. Physical decentralisation was not completed or taken forward, investment in regional staff was poor, and there was a feeling that commitment to regionalisation has been weakening over time.
- There is a crucial challenge in better integration of DA work and issue based work.
- The experience of interface of region with policy and impact assessment unit has been very poor.

The above were the lessons on the programmatic approaches that AAB followed during the CSP - II period. For **Programmatic intervention**, AAB in CSP - II update focused on six strategic objectives (SO). These were:

1. Strengthened position of identified groups of poor, marginalised and vulnerable people.
2. More effective institutional responses to the causes and consequences of poverty marginalisation and vulnerability at all levels.
3. Improved basic education.
4. Improvement in the condition and position of women.
5. More stable income and asset position.
6. Better governance and more effective citizenship.

Our achievements related to these six strategic objectives are shown in the sections below. We will be explaining the achievements for objectives one, two and six as the combined work of these three objectives were related to our governance work.

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<sup>11</sup> AAB's partner GBS in Bogra is providing assistive devices to people with disability and simultaneously works to build awareness of the community people as well as government official at different levels to be more supportive towards the disabled people. As a result union Parishods has built ramps on their premises for easier access of the disabled people and bus owners have issued free passes to disabled persons on the local routes.

## Achievements related to SO 1, 2 and 6

AAB has been successful in building relationships, linkages and collaborations with NGOs, civil society organisations, local government institutions, banks, private sector institutions as well as professional bodies such as journalist forum and academicians. A good number of relationships were geared towards making the non-poor institutions to be involved in more pro-poor movements and promote pro-poor policies at the national level and at the local level. All these relationships and processes induced social mobilisation that assisted the poor to claim their rights. Furthermore, AAB assisted people's organisations at the grassroots level that created pressure on the authorities for reforming government institutions at the local level.

Before the formulation of CSP II, there was no proper understanding of governance work in AAB, thus AAB lacked the credibility to work in issues of "Governance". During CSP II implementation such intervention was initiated. Some innovative activities were undertaken, such as "Internship Project with the parliament members for lobbying". Various issues came from **Reflect** circles, such as the need of scrutinising effectiveness and accountability and responsiveness of publicly funded initiatives. We adopted Report Card method for doing this. We also formed a coalition with DemocracyWatch, Khan Foundation, TIB, FEMA, BLAST, BELA, Ain-O-Shalish Kendra, NEOC & PPRC to promote socio-economic rights and to protect civil and political rights. AAB has taken lessons from these initiatives, some of them are consolidated below.

- **Crisis and political events provide strategic opportunities for dynamic gains:** AAB has experienced that crisis such as a riot or events such as elections focus people's attention much more sharply than more general issues related to public health services and the like. Such crises and events open up political space for spontaneous popular mobilisation and they can re-order traditional assumptions and power relationships.
- **Unorganised civil society, an important constituency for poor people:** Early experience of supporting poor people's movements points to the fact that an approach of co-opting from non-poor civil society can produce greater gains in initiating changes and forcing responses from public institutions. Such group includes activists, victims, students, intellectuals, teachers, journalists-all individuals with an inquisitive mind, a willingness to act as an "axe to grind" , a respected following, and without a platform or an opportunity to get engaged
- **Voices of the Poor can be reached to the local government only through nurturing at grassroots:** With the help of AAB's local partner BACE grassroots people have approached and received training on vegetable cultivation, fish cultivation, animal raising and tree plantation from local government. Poor women group in Savar, Dhaka had a successful negotiation with Union Parishad to have a road constructed in their area. Such learning of some partner organisations, in shifting from service to rights approach, has created some "Best Practices" to be replicated by others.

The other important lesson emerging from building relationships with civil society is that there is no single amorphous civil society. Within the political economy of policy making processes, it is clear that there is a clear agenda of the civil society elite at the national level which often does not reflect the language and agenda of the poor or people outside of the policy elite circles. Therefore, building alliances in civil society will often ring hollow and could in fact have regressive effects unless there is careful discrimination on AAB's part.

## Achievements of SO 3: Improved Basic Education

Education programme implemented during CSP II period gave us some major insights into the activities of education system in the country. Insights into the exclusion process of children from the education system and issues of education governance prompted us to devote our resources for ensuring "Quality education" for the children. Our work through taking life histories of children deprived of education, opinion of teachers, community members made us realise that education for the poor children has to be relevant and functional, so that they are able to seize opportunities and avoid or cope with their daily challenges. This requires a curriculum that is sensitive to local circumstances; as such that education in the urban slum would be wholly different that the education in the offshore char's children.

AAB has used a whole range of innovative participatory tools such as report card, participatory videos and participatory budget analysis for the work done in education. This has been a lesson that we might have to use different tools for different issues.

## Achievements of SO 4: Improvements in the condition and position of women

From the experience gained over the past years it became evident that AAB needs to do the following.

- **Reassessment of existing programmes** i.e., micro finance empowered women at family level, whether this initial empowerment can touch other institutions in the immediate surroundings and beyond-needs further investigation.
- **Addressing inequities at policy and legal instruments:** Strengthening formal and informal institutions in favour of women needed and also methodically looking at the policy and legal instruments and generating public opinion to change the existing discriminatory policies and laws.
- **Advocacy for increased care structure for the victims:** AAB both at local and national levels must think how it can create/strengthen or increase care structure for the victims. This could be done by strengthening women's networks and victims' forum and establishing institutional

services to provide women with counselling and other support to assist them overcome the trauma. During CSP II period, 16 networks have been established but scope of work of such networks needs to be specifically clarified.

- AAB missed an opportunity as it failed to link up with other reproductive health service providing organisations so that AAB partners could gradually give up service delivery from this sector.

At the organisational level, AAB has achieved a gender ratio of 65:35, though having incorporated gender equity as core values and in different policies.

## Achievements of SO 5: **More stable and improved income and asset position**

The strategic objective five was commonly referred to as “Livelihood” related work within AAB. The purview of this SO was diverse which included IGA skill training, disaster preparedness and response, HIV/AIDS related work, Anti-trafficking work, disability, work related to natural resources and also work related to IFIs.

AAB's work related to the skills development of the participants has been geared towards making them self-sufficient in handling or starting a small business that increased the income of the family. Our experience with this is that mostly the businesses which are chosen by the women participants are confined to the homestead such as livestock or poultry rearing, and homestead gardening. In cooperation with our partners, we not only trained the participants, but brought in concerned government officials as facilitators, which created an opportunity for the participants to develop linkages with these duty bearers. We also encouraged participants who wanted to start small businesses to make linkages with the commercial banks that provide credit facilities. But experiences show that as the business grows, the control gradually moves from the women to the men. We will have to look into this matter deeply for finding alternatives to this situation.

AAB's learning is that its impact varies from region to region within Bangladesh. Areas of quick development of transport and communication system combined with quick expansion of non agricultural rural sectors are very different from the regions where economy is still dominated by agriculture and remoteness contributes to poor communication and transport. This ground reality prompts us to frame rights issue differently depending on micro finance's contribution towards promotion of rights and poverty reduction. AAB's saw that micro finance empowered women at family level. However, this is counterbalanced by increased workload as well as whether this initial empowerment can spill over other institutions in the immediate surroundings and beyond-needs further investigation.

**Our disaster response** work has been positive throughout the CSP - II. Our relief effort during the flood 2000 in the south west part assisted people to recover from the aftermath of the floods more quickly. We also have responded to the floods in 2004, with the assistance of WFP/UNDP, ECHO and core fund. We are now seen by the UN agencies as a competent organisation that has the ability to respond to natural disasters on a national scale. Our relationships with the local partners are a great asset in this regard. Our disaster preparedness work on the other hand needs to be more comprehensive throughout the working areas. Our analysis of vulnerability of the people needs to be mainstreamed among the partners and also integrated into the development programmes. Our learning from the last couple of years of experience is that using local capacity and material in disaster response has a positive result for quickening the pace of livelihood recovery of the local people. We also need to strengthen the local coping capacities/mechanisms.

Taking lessons from the work experience of the offshore island Bhola, AAB recognised that the achievement of development sector on poor and marginalised becomes threatened if disasters are not addressed adequately and in right manner. Initially having a mission of livelihood security perspective, the all disaster management practices of AAB was influenced by income and asset. But gradually it started to learn that there are other relevant factors like, education, health, capacity building of local people, governance systems which are crucial to address to reduce future vulnerability. After several years of involvement with emergency response activity, AAB has crystallised some learning:

**Expressing solidarity with poor and marginalised** by *taking sides* with them at the time of disaster while remaining *impartial* in the question of lives particularly during the rescue operation. During the flood of 2000, AAB provided housing materials, special food for pregnant and breast-feeding mothers, and awareness education on personal hygiene and also established emergency medical camp.

**Addressing future vulnerabilities in education sector** by linking disaster with regular development. Started with education materials and some tuition fees, AAB tried to develop a separate approach on education and disaster. In the flood operation in 2000, AAB analyzed the possible impact of flood in the education sector and developed a separate focus and project for education. AAB targeted a total of 97 community owned primary and junior primary schools and successfully reduced the probable drop out.

**The AAB flood intervention seriously analyzes the livelihood issues**, constantly learns from the experience and develops its approach. The long term approach gave AAB to take new lessons and innovate new direction in disaster management. The creation of emergency fund from interest free loan, providing financial support to the micro-finance institutions, and back home assistance projects are the good practices. Back home packages contributed very significantly in short term rehabilitation of the flood victims. It did also contribute in re-shaping mental make-up regarding confidence of starting normal life.

**Using local capacity in the disaster management** has a very good result in quick recovery of livelihood system. During the flood operation 2000, AAB and partner engaged local people to prepare most of the materials, which created local employment.

**Build local capacities and address future vulnerabilities** in disaster management work through strengthening *traditional coping* mechanisms. Capacity building of the partners to face disaster was the first step. AAB developed a rights based disaster management module to train the responsive personnel of partner organisations so that they can ensure and monitor the rights based implication during any disaster and emergency.

**In responding to disaster and conflict**, we address the practical need of the women, and try to develop their own constituency, so that they can claim their rights. Emphasis was given on the issues of security, violence and trafficking. Violence during disaster, especially in the shelter camps, is a regular phenomenon. During the flood in 1998, Nari Moitree took initiative to form a camp management committee and did advocacy with the local ward commissioner to protect the women and adolescents girls from being harassed inside the shelter camp.

**Our work on HIV/AIDS and human trafficking** has led to the creation of a parliament members support group, which is unique in the Bangladesh context. Through this we will have access to policy making body and process and in future we can influence policies related to HIV/AIDS. We are not only working at the national level with this but also concentrating at the grassroots level to raise awareness on issues related to HIV/AIDS and human trafficking. We also need to expand our work ensuring the rights of the migrant workers. HIV/AIDS awareness programme can effectively be done through image advocacy tool rather IEC/BCC material, where people cannot read and have very limited access to radio and television. Lessons of the last few years of work are that advocacy required national level on AIDS, awareness on cause and preventive measures among the people and ensuring medicine for the positive people. Besides, there is a scope to work for the rights of migrant workers at policy level, peoples' voice platform through formation of forum, goodwill ambassador development and international migrant E- Group formation. Anti trafficking programme has identified certain potentials and formed parliamentary caucus. Campaign is more effective than time bound project. Other points are utilisation of the immense potentiality of Reflect as tool, visual advocacy tool, raising the voice of the victims of trafficking, blaming administration and law enforcement agencies on this issue and redesigning of micro credit for the affected hard core poor. Finally debate on migration and trafficking is still dominated by the north/western ideology.

**Highlight of the work on disability** came in 2001 as the “Disability Welfare Act 2001” bill was passed in the national parliament. This was achieved through joint collaborative efforts of AAB and National Forum of Organisations Working with the Disabled (NFOWD). We have also successfully involved the local government institutions to be more responsive to the needs of the people with disability. Also we have successfully engaged business communities to provide special entitlements to people with disabilities. Our work has resulted in inclusion of the disabled children in government educational schools, which paved the way for children with disability to be enrolled to the schools in future. Our work through the community based rehabilitation (CBR) programme has transformed some communities in the way they look at the issues of disability. They

have become more sensitive to these issues and are more responsive to their needs in general. Even the way they used to address people with disability has changed. In future, we need to include work related to natural resources and also work related to IFIs.

AAB has been engaged in **multiple-levels** to establish rights of the people with disabilities (PWDs). **At primary level** through partnership with grassroots level NGOs (GBS, YPSA, GBSS) who primarily promotes community based rehabilitation (CBR) programmes. In this level, AAB could bring about positive changes in the life and livelihood of the PWDs, created hope and models of enabling environment for the PWDs. **At Secondary level:** with the POs some of them are examples of ideal CBR work. **At Tertiary level** in the national level policy advocacy work; the combination of these three made our difference that could strongly claim its success on its engagement and it brought about a visible change in the overall scenario of disability movement in Bangladesh. AAB did not perceive it as a medical or a charity issue, rather a poverty issue and AAB dealt with it from a social perspective.

**Exclusiveness of planning process** is a problematic idea that AAB have practiced so far. A Sector Specialist on disability was there to monitor this issue so that our planning, be it a DA or a Non-DA, includes the agenda of PWDs while AAB have planned projects on Education, Livelihoods, Governance or on Gender Equality but it did not work out. Apart from some 'disability focused DAs' (YPSA and GBS), no one included the agenda (SUS is the only exception). AAB missed opportunities to include disability as an inequality/ poverty issue into AAB's programmes. AAB had some negative experiences with some of our long-term partners like FAVH at Faridpur for its financial misappropriation and BCCW at Dhaka for its sluggish management pace. Such examples create a negative notion about certain areas of work. Organisational understanding on disability is not that clear, so AAB as an organisation needs a conceptual clarity and it should hold a commitment so that it employs PWDs, allocate equitable resources and advocate in favour of inclusion of disability issues in its global agenda. Besides,

**AAB also missed an opportunity** of "Raising funds from corporate sector despite the new national budgetary provision of tax exemption on disability related donations". AAB have started to be more focused and as a part of that have initiated working on the specific issues of **Women with Disabilities** (WWDs) and planning to work on **Children with Disabilities** (CWDs). Major objectives of such specific work will be to challenge the governmental **Rules of Business** that creates institutional barriers to the life and livelihood of the children and women with disabilities getting their right to education and support. **Providing forward linkage support** to some of the Non-DAs successfully grasped the grassroots voices of the PWDs through the Reflect process and initiated innovative rights based works. For example, AAB have provided support to AIESDAP, Jhinaidah to carry out follow up activities for the children with disabilities it has enrolled in the government primary schools last year.

**Ethnic Minority:** During CSP II period, AAB was not sure at which level (i.e., at grass root, policy-local or national) it needs to work as in many cases, the government is in dilemma. But there is ample scope of donor commitment. AAB's past few years practical experience has helped them explore the scope of work for education, health, skill development (but not only demand meet up but also further i.e., market linkage) and access to resource for both (demand and supply) .

**Natural & Productive resource conservation:** One of the major tasks AAB accomplished is Sundarban Conservation Project (SBCP) watch group formation and recognition of this group by Asian Development Bank (ADB). This watch group has created access to convey the people's voice and ADB now agrees on mistakes in designing SBCP. But there are still much scope, which AAB has learnt by dint of last few years' effort. Ice breaking required on donor group's conservativeness to share information. Still the watch group cannot achieve the capacity of prediction, through which they will be able to show their resistance. There is no existence of Information on impacts of Bangladesh's dam or forest & plantation in the global publication. For identity marketing, English versions of publication materials required more rather than Bangla version. Less effort was given on knowledge management and capitalisation for which effective use of IT by the programme people is very much required.

**Resisting Powerful International Institutions:** This became an area to work with only in the early part of 2002. Lessons of such initiatives by AAB are: due to lack of AAB position paper, it had become very difficult to build the strategy; Policy literacy capacity building on the IFIs among AAB staff and partners. We are assisting local level mobilisation on structural development that are putting people in to vulnerability. To increase paddy production and protecting settlement from disaster, the structural development started in early 1960s. Coastal embankment project [CEP] is a project that was undertaken for the whole coastal belt of Bangladesh. Despite few good results, the CEP promoted shrimp farming in this area. On the other side, CEP also made a number of districts permanently water logged. Many rivers died, which are the lifeline of the area, due to blocking of drainage system. Uttaran, one the development area of AAB has taken this issue, when poor people started protesting against a project called Khulna Jessore Drainage Rehabilitation Project [KJDRP]. Uttaran formed local water committee with the local people and mobilised civil society and media in supporting grass root mobilisation. Uttaran undertook few participatory researches and with the help of Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh [ADAB], brought this issue to government and funding agency, particularly Asian Development Bank [financier of KJDRP]. As a result of series of dialogues, workshops and grassroots mobilisation the ADB undertook an environmental and social impact assessment of KJDRP and offered few alternative options. One of these options is Tidal River Management [TRM], which was suggested by the local people. Now Uttaran is influencing the government and ADB to adopt the TRM.

## Other than programmatic intervention, AAB's present positional identity is as follows:

**Organisation Development:** Experience in 2001 again proved the importance of forming diversified appropriate partnerships to advance rights. The major shift in the nature of partnership in 2001 for AAB was expansion of its constituency beyond community based organisation.

A shift in approach necessitates to focus more on identifying pro-poor issues and addressing groups that face denial of rights the most. These two broader analyses provide guidance for selection of partnerships and alliances. Earlier, those having management capacity were first selected as “right partner” and then areas of work were identified, but shift in approach which required concentrating more on group behavioural change, rather than individual behavioural change. The greatest challenge for AAB has been or likely to be confronted even in the coming year is influential leadership mind sets and organisational behaviour. These organisations were mostly involved in service led activities that have some de-linked themselves in the process with macro-policy and rights related issues. Other achievements of AAB: better-defined role in operationalising rights based approach in partnership, strategically formed and strengthened significant numbers of non poor local institutions for pro-poor movements, decentralised authority protocol, horizontal movements affected and increased numbers of horizontal working groups formed.

**Shared Learning:** AAB gives emphasis on shared learning in the process of reducing poverty through promoting rights as well as an identifying link indicators while shuttling between service and rights.

AAB rolled out **ALPS** with an attempt to situate in the current context of Bangladesh and consequently evolved ALPS Bangladesh. Fixation of learning from “Participatory Review and Reflections Process” into 3 years rolling plans and budget. Challenges still remains-

- consolidating and documenting experiences as well as effectively using the learning for continuous programme development in 4 thrust areas within the broader framework of RBA
- demonstrating and communicating achievements and failures in reducing poverty through promoting rights

**AAB Identity:** It is always very challenging to build a public image that is national and also an image that AAB stands for the poor and marginalised people. AAB has successfully managed its image that it is primarily accountable to the poor and marginalised people even in controversial or critical issues and gained credibility from different actors. Constant in house reflections and innovations have helped AAB understand rights based approach and gain maturity as an organisation. This has also helped develop a niche area and credibility for AAB among other development partners and stakeholders.

# Annex 3:

## Country Strategy Paper III Development Process Note

The arduous journey of ActionAid Bangladesh to develop its third country strategy paper (CSP - III) has been a time consuming process. The three phases of the journey started off with the **review and looking back** to achievements and challenges of second country strategy paper (CSP- II), navigating through the pains of **looking inward**, resulting in organisational and personal soul searching, then finally experiencing the joys of **finding the future**. It made the whole organisation realise the importance of participation and processes that empower people to find their own destination and the need for transforming the journey into an organic process, consolidating the ownership of the end product.

The processes we followed were incremental, inching forward with every step that we took, transforming not only the organisation to be more effective, efficient and vibrant but also ourselves, the staff, to work in a new environment, with a better understanding of what is to be done and how. We had discarded the traditional mechanistic way of strategy development involving a select few, in favour of greater participation by all levels of staff in the whole journey. The processes intertwined views of external experts with internal experience that led to debates, making both sets of people much richer in experience and knowledge. A glimpse of methodologies of the various processes is depicted in the following sections.

Looking back and looking inwards began almost simultaneously. The later one complimented the other in understanding the various issues related to organisation and of implementation process.

The internal process of looking back started with creating a team within staff to review the literatures produced within the CSP-II period. We tried to consolidate the knowledge which was created through these publications split into different themes and sectors. It made us realise how much information we were generating and how much of those were actually used for better implementation of programmes.

The third eye view of looking back was initiated with the review of the years of CSP-II, trying to gauge and feel the achievements, challenges - through reviewing enormous piles of publications and other information, going to the programme areas (DAs, non DAs), and talking to the programme participants and various stakeholders (NGOs staff, government officials, donors etc). This work was assigned to a team of three external consultants having expertise on poverty analysis and local governance, organisational development and gender. Their vast experiences in the issues relating to Bangladesh were useful to locate AAB in the whole development arena of Bangladesh and assisted us in finding our future area of work. The team used various research methodologies, which included field visits, focus group discussions and using formal questionnaire, specially for partner survey. We also commissioned a study to look into special situation of "Gender and Livelihood" and how the other NGOs at the national and grassroots level are working on issue.

Complementing this, we simultaneously started the phase of looking inwards, at ourselves, giving every body a chance to express her/him self from two different identities that every staff had - as member of a team/unit and also as a staff of a particular grade. This very sensitive process was conducted by an experienced consultant with OD and training experience. Staff were by this time well into acquainted to the various review processes that were going around them and enabling environment created a space for them to open up and took the liberty to indulge into analyzing

critical and sensitive OD issues that were plaguing the organisation. The outcomes of these function and tier wise consultations were instrumental in reshaping the programme and policy work for AAB and creation of the thematic structure, though other processes had large contribution also.

The process of incorporating the views of the larger organisation, ActionAid International (AAI), came through the peer consultation. Six peers from across the globe of AAI were involved. They extensively interacted with the staff, partners and programme participants trying to understand each of their views on the achievements and challenges. They finally produced a peer review report that explained their analysis of the programme and OD related issues as they saw it and put forward recommendations. It had also given many staff to interact with staff of other CPs for the first time and understand their work and processes and gave the opportunity to assess our efficiency and effectiveness in relation to the larger organisation.

The next logical step was to internalise all the information generated and try to thresh out the last remaining difference within ourselves. The opportunity for this vital process came through the retreat of all AAB staff after the looking back and inwards was completed. The retreat was in a sense "The Bridge" between Reflections and reviews the way forward. We started our discussion on the future of AAB in this retreat, which was the foundation stone for the CSP-III development. During the discussion a consensus was somewhat reached on some thematic issues to work on. But also it was felt that we needed to know more on the issues that were identified.

Out of the need to know more on the issues identified during the retreat, the necessity to consult various groups and communities of poor and marginalised people arose. Their inputs assisted us to shape our strategic objectives and goals for the CSP. Furthermore it was felt that we needed to consult the various stakeholders and players with the development sector of Bangladesh. We wanted their inputs to be doable in various themes and issues. This process assisted us to streamline our thoughts of the retreat and improve our knowledge of the issues.

AAB during this time also implemented the interim thematic structure and also the identification of partners in various themes was also done.

Then came the last but most crucial phase- shaping the future through the writing of the actual Country Strategy Paper (CSP) III. It was up to the writing team of six staff with a larger reading group of sixteen staff to complete the CSP - III and present it to the whole organisation. It was on their shoulder to consolidate the vast information and opinions of the various people and staff.

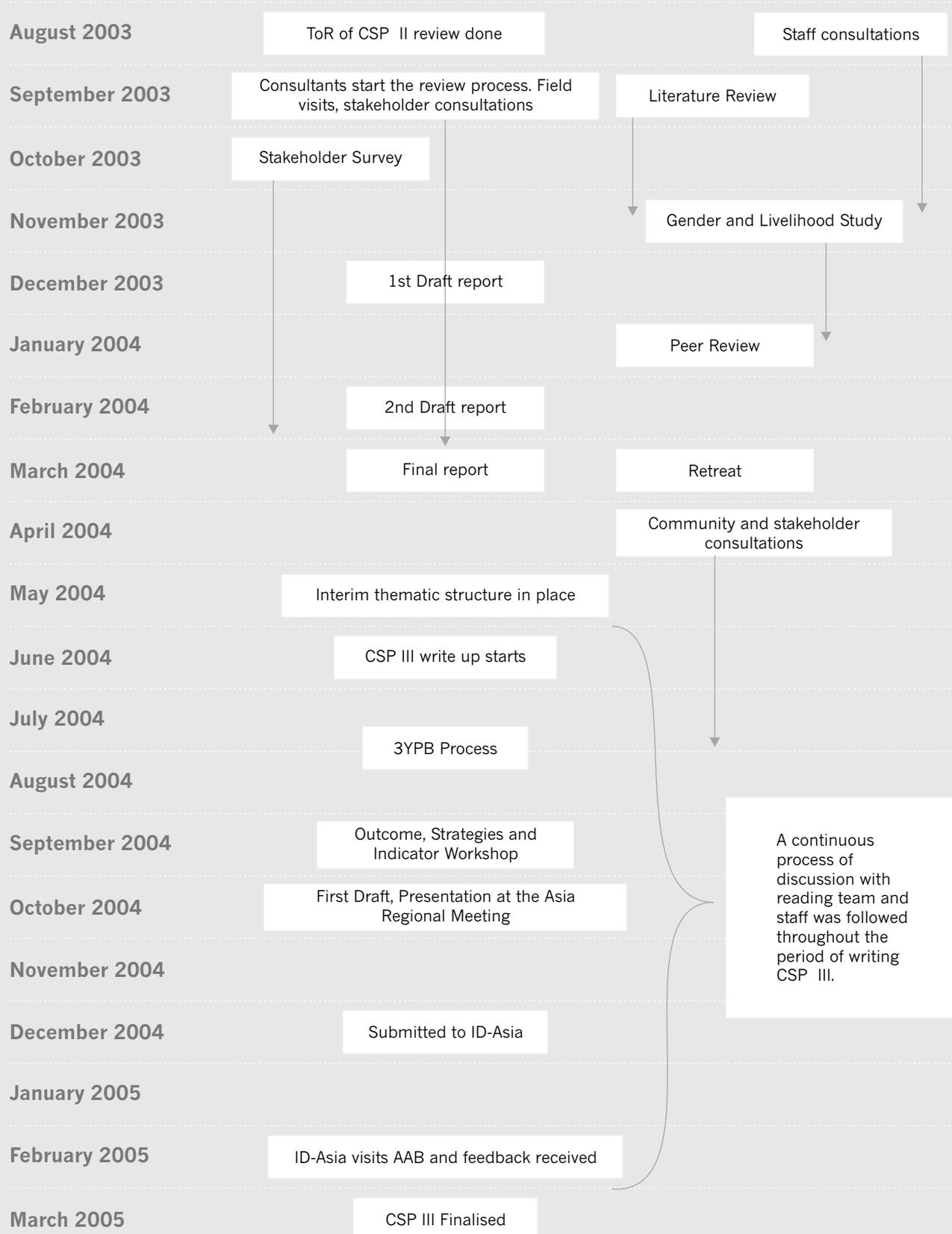
Also during this time the three year plans and budget process started. This gave the staff an opportunity to plan under the thematic structure and take a first look at what could be thematic outcomes and strategies. The writing team had to consult various staff during the write-up process, go through the enormous information, finally bringing a consensus on the goals and strategic objectives.

During the write-up process the writing team felt that the staff of the themes and functions needed to come together and decide for themselves the outcomes and strategies for the objectives in the CSP-III. This also promoted the ownership of the CSP - III within the organisation and all

professional staff had actually wrote up the outcome and strategies sections of the CSP-III, which practically took the load off the writing team. This process was accomplished through an "Outcome and Strategies Workshop" with all the staff. Then the first draft was prepared and it was presented at the Asia Regional Meeting (ARM) in Cambodia. After incorporating the feed from ARM, it was given to International Director for Asia in December 2004. He gave his feedback after his visit to AAB in February 2005.

Finally taking all the inputs we were able to produce the long awaited Country Strategy Paper III of ActionAid Bangladesh. The time consuming process finally paid off, as the long process gave all the staff ample time to internalise. Moreover, the three year planning process was done during the period of the write-up and the experience of adjusting to the thematic structure contributed to the better understanding the outcome and strategies.

## CSP III Development Process Timeline



# Annex 4:

## Country Strategy Paper III Development Teams

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