

# ActionAid International Open Information Policy

## Preamble

1. ActionAid International believes that timely free flow of information is essential for ensuring accountability, learning, trust and good performance.
2. This policy is guided by ActionAid International's commitment to transparency and to sharing of information primarily with poor and marginalised people and their organisations. We are also directly accountable to our staff, partners, donors and host governments.
3. The purpose of this policy is to guide all staff and the whole organisation for open sharing of information. Another purpose is to inform people outside ActionAid International what they can expect or demand, in terms of information, from ActionAid International.
4. This policy describes how and what minimum information ActionAid International will share proactively with the general public.
5. ActionAid International will share additional information with staff, partners, associates, people and organisation we work with in a timely and accessible manner to ensure respect and accountability to the specific relationship. This additional sharing of information will be guided by the relevant policies, procedures (and agreements or contracts) related to the specific relationship.

## Information to be shared freely and openly

The following sets of information of various categories will be shared freely, openly and proactively:

- **Fundamentals:** (ActionAid International's vision, mission, values, goals and objectives, strategies, legal registration and status and registered office address).
- **Governance & Key Functionaries:** (Names and brief biographies of members of Board of Trustees, Advisory Members, Chairs, Treasurers, Chief Executive or Executive Director, International Directors, Country Directors, Senior Management Team Members).
- **Organizational policies:** (Key decision making process, in terms of who makes the decision for Trustee appointment, staff recruitment; performance appraisal; staff development and promotion; strategies, plans and budget approval; review and evaluations ought to be presented upfront clearly. For other decision-making processes the organisation's current organizational policies and procedures manuals/documents-HR/OD policies, Finance Policies, Ethical policies, Gender policies, Fundraising policies- should also be shared freely and openly).
- **Work Plans and Strategies:** (ActionAid International's international, regional and country specific strategies, three-year plans and annual work plans including financial information pertaining to key cost centres).
- **Performance:** (Current account of lessons, achievements, success, failures, constraints, innovations either directly or through annual reports, review reports and audit statements at least on an annual basis).
- **Staff:** (Number of staff, gender - and social/ethnic, if applicable, in accordance with diversity policies - composition, staff cost, salary band and staff per band, staff benefits and allowances).
- **Funds and finance:** (Types, proportion and absolute figures of income; sources of income, expenditure by categories and heads; planned and actual cost ratio for staff cost, support cost, project cost, fundraising cost, administration cost; funding structure; types and location of fund investments; fundraising methods and products).

- **Relationships:** (Key relationships we have in terms of which groups of poor and marginalised people we work with, who our partners are, which networks, coalitions, and alliances we belong to and work with, who do we receive money from, where do we invest our money, who are our bankers, auditors, lawyers).
- **Issue-based positions:** (Our guiding thinking, positions and proposals on issues related to our mission, objectives and strategies, particularly those related to active advocacy work).
- **Grievances:** (Guiding and decision making policies and procedures related to how we receive and deal with grievances and how we receive feedback and comments from within and outside).
- **Feedback:** (A periodic presentation of our stakeholders' views of us and our performance through annual reports and review reports).

## Ways and means of sharing information<sup>1</sup>

- Representative offices at international (headquarters), regional (regional offices), national (country programme offices) level will be primarily responsible for sharing information related to their own areas and domains of responsibilities according to this policy.
- All information shared will be timely. Information shared will be dated to indicate the timeliness.
- At international and regional levels, ActionAid International will share information mentioned above in English or any other appropriate international language. Country offices at national level will share information in one or two major national or international languages as may be appropriate to them.
- Information mentioned above under the headings of 'Fundamentals' and 'Key functionalities' related to ActionAid International's international organisation will be used by all parts of the organisation to share together with relevant national or regional details. In addition, country programmes, regions and members of ActionAid International will also use each other's information to share with their constituencies, especially when they are accountably linked.
- As per ActionAid International's commitment, this policy is relevant only if poor and marginalised people and their organizations have access to timely and quality information in accessible forms and formats. It is therefore essential that local arrangements be made to ensure that sharing of information takes place in appropriate forums.
- ActionAid International websites will be the main venue for sharing the information mentioned above proactively to wider range of audience. ActionAid International, within the limits of its resources, will also send information as requested (as per this policy) in electronic or printed form to an authentic address of the person or the organisation requesting information.
- Anonymous requests for information may not be responded to.
- Heads of different levels of the organisation – international (Chief Executive), regional (Regional Directors), national (Country Directors) – will be the custodians of this policy but the day to day responsibility of implementation and management will be the responsibility of the person appointed by them to be responsible for external communications.
- Reviewing compliance of this policy will be the function of such staff and units responsible for the ActionAid International Accountability, Learning and Planning System (*Alps*). Such review reports will be presented and discussed in Regional Meetings, International Directors Meetings and Trustees Meetings at least once year and at the time of annual reviews and three-year plans.

## Confidentiality

ActionAid International shall not disclose the following kinds of information:

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<sup>1</sup> See Open Information Operational Guidelines.

- Personal details of staff: address, family details, income, property, sexual orientation, illness and similar information.
- Intellectual property or other information which has been disclosed or provided to ActionAid International under any obligation of confidentiality or which is subject to legal disclosure restrictions, or intellectual property of ActionAid International, unless consent of such disclosure has been obtained from the owner of such intellectual property.
- Legal advice and matters in dispute or under negotiation including disciplinary and investigative information generated in or for ActionAid International.
- Information dealing entirely with internal administration or operating systems which has no direct effect outside the organisation, or internal documents written by staff to their colleagues, supervisors or subordinates, unless those documents are intended for public circulation.
- Fundraising information, sharing of which will jeopardise ActionAid International's competitiveness in fundraising capacity.
- It is only in exceptional cases and circumstances that ActionAid International can temporarily suspend part or whole of this policy. Such suspension will require approval from ActionAid International's Chief Executive. Suspension of the policy will be clearly explained with reasons to people we work with and the general public through the mechanisms mentioned above.
- In unusual situations (e.g., war, insurgency) of insecurity, threat and vulnerability to the organisation, staff or partners. ActionAid International may choose not to share any or selected information for a specified period.
- Similarly, if sharing of certain information in the specific local situation will make staff and the organisation highly insecure and vulnerable, the relevant ActionAid International office may choose not to share the particular information for a specified period.

### **Implementation of this policy**

- A set of detailed operational guidelines to assist in the implementation of this policy will be prepared by an international team before the end of 2007.
- All parts of the organisation, following necessary preparation, will fully implement this policy latest by July 2007
- If necessary, parts of the organisation, particularly smaller and fund-vulnerable country programmes will be supported from centrally pooled resources for initial foundation investment required for implementing this policy.

March 2007