



A glimpse into  
India **planning &  
budgeting 2010 -**  
**Alps** in action

**act:onaid**



ActionAid **India Country  
Programme**

October **2009**

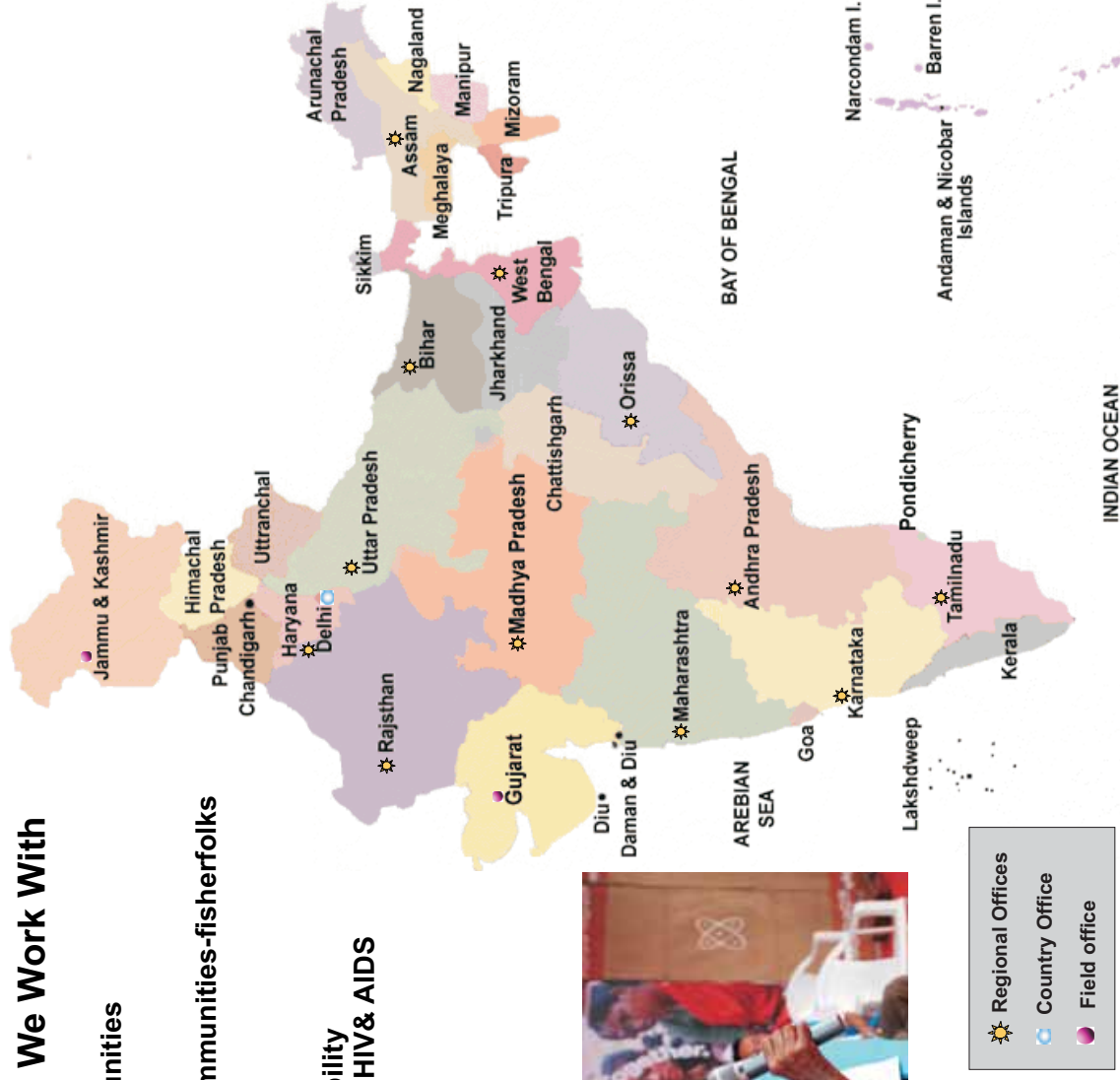
## Social Groups We Work With

Indigenous communities  
 Dalits  
 Muslims  
 Most backward communities-fisherfolks  
 Urban Poor  
 Women  
 Children  
 Persons with disability  
 People Living with HIV& AIDS



## Rights Focus

Right to Food  
 Livelihood & Employment  
 Right to Health  
 Right to Education  
 Right to Peace & Human Security  
 Right to Dignity & Identity  
 Right to Housing



Reaching out to approx. 8 million poor and marginalized people through  
 87 long term projects with 92 partners in 24 States & 1 Union Territory

## India Plans and Budget

**A**s we look at the year ahead, we also look back at the experiences and struggles of the past. We see the poor and marginalised continue being excluded from India's "economic growth". We see them being pushed further into poverty with loss of livelihood, resources, food security and a stake in the model of development India's policymakers are pursuing unabated.

The communities we work with are articulating a critique of the economic and political regime that is making their day-to-day struggles for a world free of poverty and a life of dignity a daunting battle.

A sincere engagement with rights-based work allows the community and partners to also prioritise on what would be the common agreed markers for the grounding of rights. These common denominators are food for the hungry, land for the landless, non-discrimination in the areas of gender, caste and religion, job for the jobless, quality school education, primary health services and so on.

The Annual Planning and Budgeting (P&B) for us is a critical expression of this bottom up organic outlook and practice of listening, reflecting, articulating and acting.

India's summer this year, the onset of which coincides with beginning of P&B process, was very harsh and dry, with rainfalls failing at a critical time and destroying food crops. Many meetings reverberated with the stories of drought and its impact on the poor.

This process that began from communities spread across 24 states and one union territory, involved 87 partners and social groups and themes, covered through 12 regional offices.

In terms of structure the process involves a range of actors, communities, social activists, alliances, partners and platform members, besides ActionAiders. But that is just one part of it. Ideas, perspectives, consensus, accountability and transparency flow through this process.

Here, we capture the spirit and movement of this process to establish its uniqueness and grounding. We also assimilate what emerged as plans for partners, regions and the India Country Programme.

I must specially thank partner communities, partners, ActionAid colleagues and General Assembly including Board members for their active participation, sharing of invaluable insights and contribution to this enriching plans and budget process, which helped us to accomplish this mammoth exercise very well on time.

**Jagat Pattanaik**  
Director (Programmes)  
ActionAid India



## Inclusive, grounded and accountable

*“It is absolutely essential that the oppressed participate in the revolutionary process with an increasingly critical awareness of their role as subjects of the transformation”*

*Paulo Freire*

Listening to the communities and partner organisations while they decided on the priorities for the year and sharing of voices from the grassroots makes this exercise, the single largest expression of an alternative and rights-based pro-poor future. An expression that not just informs but also identifies actions.

This process needs to be seen in the context of a range of engagements during the course of our work, through campaigns with specific social groups or themes. This at the national level often imparts a cross-cutting character to the struggles against denial of rights and marginalisation.

An example of this can be seen in the Pre-Election Campaign, held earlier this year, when India went to poll to elect a new government. Thousands of women, from hundreds of villages across 24 states and one Union Territory came together to make political parties take note of what they had missed in their manifestos, the most important being the issue of entitlements and massive food price rise.

### Partners in Planning

- Marginalised communities
- CBO representatives
- Partner organisations
- Eminent activists
- General Assembly
- Members of ActionAid Association
- Board Members
- Country Programme Staff
- Members from ActionAid International

Communities, partners, platforms and regions were woven together in a seamless symphony that also highlighted through individual stories the way loss of livelihood and denial is impacting women and poor communities.

### Communities



*REFLECT group members in a planning meeting*

As a start-up to the Plans & Budget (P&B) for 2010, the partner communities came together in the months of July and August to reflect on successes, challenges and missed opportunities, before getting into village level planning for the subsequent year.

This participatory planning enables all to contribute and reflect together. Plans developed at the village level were subsequently fed into the district and federation plans.

Representatives from ActionAid Association's General Assembly, constituting eminent activists, leaders and community

representatives, were involved to add value from their experiences and struggles on the ground.

Colleagues from ActionAid International also participated and contributed by sharing work in their individual countries and at ActionAid international level.

Eminent social activists and analysts were also taken onboard during the regional and national processes. This two-way learning process allowed programmatic analysis of issues, while furthering the politics of our work to build alliances with like minded people/groups fighting against poverty and patriarchy.

### **Strengthening transparency and accountability**

The Accountability, Learning and Planning System (Alps) principle is the overarching philosophy that influences the plans and budget exercise in India country programme.

The process follows a 'bottom-up' approach. Starting from the preparation of village plans, the community members are a part of each stage leading to the review at the national level.

Unrestricted and detailed discussions on the plans and budget items make the entire process transparent. Nothing remains hidden from or inaccessible to any stakeholder. All these aspects help enhance transparency and strengthen ActionAid's downward accountability, to the very last person in the community.

### **Alliance building to deliver our Strategy**

'Rights First', our Country Strategy Paper III mandates strategic action with the socially excluded communities with special focus on rights of women, children, people with disability and people living with HIV and AIDS. Also, in order for them to participate as full citizens in the political, economic and social processes, along with voice and dignity, poor people need access to entitlements of food, water, health, employment, education, housing and human security. Further, in order to fight discrimination, inequity and exclusion it is also necessary that we build solidarity and alliances with larger civil society organisations. To achieve this, we organise and mobilise the socially excluded communities within the rule of law framework and enable their alliances at local, national and international level. At another level, we network and build alliances with other organisations so that poor and excluded people have full access to and enjoy all human rights guaranteed by the Indian Constitution and International instruments.

#### **India Planning and Budgeting - Key Features**

- Bottom up
- Participatory and collective
- Transparent and accountable
- Learning centred
- Flexible
- Responsive to external environment
- Driven by AAI's vision and mission

**"Rights First", our CSP III mandates building an Alliance of the marginalised for Full Citizenship Rights for all.**

The P&B process allows fostering such alliances. The interactions during the P&B process gives the community, the partners and other participants the opportunity to learn from each other and strengthen not just intra - but also inter-group alliances amongst themselves.

To cite an example, while participating in the 2009 planning process at the national level, three large Dalit networks from the two states of Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan resolved to join hands and forge a larger national level alliance. In another initiative, two regional level people's platforms, Jan Pahel of Bhopal and Jan Udgosh of Jaipur region, agreed to explore the possibility of coming together in the form of a larger alliance.

### **Our core constituencies for rights action**

- **Indigenous People**
- **Dalits**
- **Muslims**
- **Fisherfolks – the most backward communities**

### **Strengthening our politics through three organisational forms**

While working towards the ultimate goal of ending poverty and injustice, ActionAid India engages with three organizational forms, which play major roles in helping the poor and excluded people realise full citizenship rights.

- a) There are many rights that are enshrined in Indian Constitution and are available to all citizens in tangible forms like legal entitlements, schemes and programmes, Supreme Court judgements, budgetary allocations etc. NGOs that we partner with are legal entities, registered with the Indian Home Ministry under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA), 1976. Within the Rule of Law framework, NGOs have the legitimacy to organize and mobilize communities to access and claim these rights thus. This work is fully within the constitutional framework.
- b) 'Platforms' is the second organisational form that we support and engage with. Here, our efforts focus on bringing together civil society organisations and other agencies and actors subscribing to a common set of ideas, goals and politics and above all a common minimum agenda. The platform process not only acknowledges and builds upon the strengths of each partner, it also brings together diverse social groups and communities and helps build a larger alliance of the marginalised which can lead the movement for transformation and social change.
- c) All social movements intrinsically relate to social change – be it changes in the social structure or in power relations, or in beliefs and value systems. Challenging the current beliefs and value systems, largely shaped by the neo-liberal order, patriarchy and fundamentalism calls for leadership from different social groups that we work with. Our CSP goal of Alliance of marginalised is believed to contribute to the social movement process and social transformation.
- d) 2009 plans and budget exercise helped crystallize the idea of a fourth organisational form – that the 926 REFLECT groups promoted by ActionAid could emerge as a fourth organizational form and play a pivotal role in the ongoing fight for rights. Once the conscientisation process has taken root, communities can come forward and take the lead in all the other three organizational forms – for example, take the lead in working towards grounding of tangible rights, take active part and inform the policy reform processes in the various platforms and most importantly lead the social movement process.



# Towards an Alliance of the Marginalized: Campaign against CZM

Asian Tsunami hits the coasts and communities on December 26, 2004. Andhra Pradesh (9 districts), Tamil Nadu (6 districts), Andaman and Nicobar Islands are badly impacted with an unprecedented damage.



## Long Term Initiatives:

- North Coastal Andhra Fisherfolk Network
- South Coastal Andhra Fisherfolk Network
- Solidarity for Asserting the Rights of the Coastal Community
- Forum for securing Land and Livelihood Rights of the Coastal Communities.
- Irula Tribal Women's Welfare Society

## Short Term Initiatives:

- Relief & Rehabilitation with psycho-social care and livelihood support
- Rebuilding of community
- Solidarity for Asserting the Rights of the Coastal Community
- Control over resources and participation in government schemes

## Building up of Platforms:

- KERATAM Network
- Digambarpur Angikar Fisherwomen's Alliance
- Samudra Teerapu Matsya Karula Union
- Mukkal Pengal/Meenavar Lyakkangalin Sammelanam
- Kanya Kumari Maavatta Meenvar Oonamuttar Iyakkaganagalin
- Sneh Samudaya National Fisherfolk Federation

## Towards alliance of the coastal communities

- Alliance across 7 states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Gujarat, Karnataka, West Bengal and 1 Union territory of Pondicherry.
- Contributed to the emergence of National Coastal Women's Movement across the 7 states and one union territory.
- Contributed to the emergence of Alliance Act Now for Women's Rights in Disasters- ANWoRD, an alliance of coastal women in South Asia.

**Lapse of CZM notification and towards a comprehensive Legislation for Coastal Land Rights!**



**act:onaid India**

## **Informed programmatic engagement**

Sharing forms a critical part of experiences and gives an opportunity to partners, communities and ActionAiders to learn from each other. The discussions often include sharing by community leaders and partners as to how they have been fighting their battles and what different strategies they employ in different situations. This helps people learn innovative strategies and activities, improving the quality of programmatic interventions in order to make 'the rest as good as the best'.

Conscious attempts are made to club sharing sessions dealing with similar issues and social groups. This not only helps improve the overall understanding of an issue, but also deepens people's understanding of how ActionAid engages with a particular social constituency in the region.

### **Some Learnings from plans and budget 2009**

- The Human Rights Based Approach can not succeed without simultaneous engagement with civil and political rights. The larger civil society needs to be informed as to how ActionAid supports the poor and marginalised in their struggle for civil and political rights and how the state machinery is trying hard to curb the people's movements.
- 'Jan Sangathan' i.e., organization and mobilization of communities is a most potent tool to fight injustice and denial of rights. Mobilising people to get organised is perfectly within the 'rule of law', and enshrined as a right in Indian constitution. Stronger efforts need to be made to make full use of this right.
- The strategy of working in alliances/platforms has been yielding good results. It is time steps were taken to build support groups in different spheres including the various state departments.
- Stronger advocacy is necessary at the state and national level to counter the cases of atrocities. Partners need to come together and develop solidarity plans for each categories of atrocity. Cases of all forms of atrocities need to be documented meticulously. These evidences would play a significant role in countering oppressive forces. Had there been enough documentation of the fact that Lalit Mehta's life was under threat, his life could perhaps be saved. We must learn from this and ensure that the necessary documentation is in place before embarking on countering atrocities.
- Stronger efforts need to be made to enlist the support of ActionAid Association board members especially those who are working on various social issues.

## **Sharpening policy advocacy**

ActionAid India is a country programme operating in a diverse socio-political and cultural set up. The national review team which travels across regions during the planning process learns from the partners and communities as to the varying needs in different corners of the country.



The planning and review forums offer the national team an opportunity of identifying areas and issues to be prioritised in policy advocacy work at larger/national level. The process therefore helps establish the much required linkage between community level interventions and policy advocacy at the macro level.

#### **Areas for Policy Advocacy in 2010**

- Drought mitigation
- Food Sovereignty, Sustainable agriculture and Climate Change
- Universalisation of Public distribution system and NREGA
- Rectification in BPL (Below Poverty Line) concept and criteria
- Advocacy around National Right to Food bill
- Women and land rights
- Making Schools and Primary Health Centres functional

#### **Searching for new ideas**

*"Without leaps of imagination, or dreaming, we lose the excitement of possibilities. Dreaming, after all, is a form of planning."*

*Gloria Steinem*

While we keep our feet on the ground, an engagement with activists and academicians for critical inputs is also of importance to us. In 2009, eminent academic Professor Anuradha Chenoy from Jawaharlal Nehru University joined the national level social group and rights-based themes review and planning process and provided her inputs to plans for 2010.

#### **Observations by Prof Anuradha Chenoy:**

1. One of ActionAid's distinctive competencies is its rich grassroots level experience. This makes it possible for its policy work to be informed by grassroots reality.
2. Any policy work has to be a two-way 'dialectical' process. There has to be a clear link between the 'policy maker' and the 'policy receiver'.
3. All policy work, while emerging from the grassroots, should also be accountable to it.
4. ActionAid is in a distinctive position to enlist the support of its partners and community in its policy level engagement. Efforts in this direction will be much more effective when they are backed by social group alliances / social movements.
5. ActionAid should take its policy work to a level of conclusion or a stage from where others can build upon or wherefrom further work can be done in future. ActionAid should not fritter away its energy by moving from one agenda to another.
6. The policy asks need to be well articulated.
7. It is time ActionAid participates in national political debates.
8. Efforts should be made to build models from successes.
9. Care should be taken to learn from policy work in other countries, for example land reforms work in Brazil or social security work in Philippines.

## Roll out of India P&B process

The process comprising a series of steps usually begins in late June and is completed in December with the approval of plans and budget documents sent to partners. The following section elaborates on the sequence in which the steps take place and what happens and who all get involved in each step.

### DA/DI Income Projections

Every year, the process begins with working out the Income Projections (the amount of resources available) for each DA/DI. The Programmes Unit leads this in coordination with the Sponsorship and Finance units. While the Sponsorship Unit provides the case link status, the Finance Unit provides the status as to the projected income and the money available as reserve. Based on this information, the Programmes Unit sends the Income Projections through Regional Offices to all DAs latest by first week of July.

### Steps in Planning Process

- Income projections
- Sharing of guidelines
- DA/DI strategic exercises
- Community consultations
- Regional project partners meeting
- Regional reviews
- National reviews which include peer assessment
- Sharing with the International

### Sharing of Guidelines

Based on the various review and reflection processes happening at different fora, the Programmes Unit puts together a broad set of guidelines on the priorities emerging from these various processes.

The major processes that helped shape 2010 guidelines included the zonal level partners meetings, the regional level pre-election campaign meetings<sup>1</sup>, a 10-day write-shop attended by 31 senior colleagues from the thematic units, social groups and programme and policy sections of ActionAid, the periodic thematic group meetings and finally the two programme staff trainings organised in June.

Addressing the adverse effects of global recession precipitated by the neo-liberal model of development - such as large scale loss and destruction of livelihoods - emerged as an area of high priority for the India programme in 2010.

The guidelines are also shared with the Senior Management Team members in the country programme, the board members of ActionAid Association, India, and finally colleagues at the ActionAid International secretariat, who all provide valuable feedbacks and suggestions.

We also take note of the international P&B guidelines shared by international team as well as the Chief Executive's communication outlining the international strategy focus and key work areas that we should prioritise collectively across the organisation.

<sup>1</sup> While the entire country was gearing up for general elections during the early months of 2009, ActionAid India encouraged its partner organisations, communities and people's platforms to undertake a nation wide pre-election campaign to influence party manifestoes in favour of the poor and marginalized. As many as five zonal consultations were organized to plan for the campaign in two phases – one before the elections and the other as a follow-up after the elections during 2009-10.

## **Learning from strategic exercises**

During the span of a 10 years cycle, each DA/DI level programme has to subject itself to three strategic planning and review processes:

- development of a perspective/ strategy for the cycle in year-two;
- a mid term review in year-five; and
- a phase-out withdrawal planning in year-eight

These strategic exercises are carried out in an entirely participatory and bottom-up fashion involving all major stakeholders including the communities, partner staff, and colleagues from the regional office and the relevant theme/social group units of ActionAid.

Quite systematic, elaborate, and spread over time, these strategic reviews furnish critical inputs from each level and help ensure coherence amongst projects working on similar issues, as also develop appropriate micro-macro linkages on different issues.

## **Regional Project Partners Meet**

Every year, ActionAid partners come together at a regional level where they discuss and deliberate on issues faced by them and arrive at a collective and coherent course of action. This helps enhance synergy amongst the efforts of partners and maximise the impact at different levels. A common minimum programme is worked out for each social group and theme. The common minimum programme then becomes the plan focus for next year.

## **Regional Level Reviews**

The first drafts of the plans and budget prepared by the DA/DI partners are shared at a regional level meeting of all partners. These meetings not only give an opportunity to the region to review the first drafts but also help in taking stock of the programme work, its prioritisation and consolidating the plans. The forum also helps the partners to know and understand each other's work and approaches. Over the years such regional reviews have become useful platforms to promote alliance building on common issues among partners.

## **National Level Review Process**

The plans finalized at the regional level are then shared with the national review team, which comprises the Country Director, Programme Director, Senior Manager-Programmes, Regional Managers, the national social group and theme leaders, and representatives from the sections of finance, sponsorship and fundraising. Community representatives and partner staff jointly share the plans and budget.

Inputs from each enrich the quality of review and discussion on the issues and factors impacting programmatic work. The national review team adds value by bringing in the learning from other regions, the macro perspective and helping in identification of areas to be prioritised in programme-policy linkage and advocacy.

In 2009, the national reviews were held at eight different locations across the country. In some cases, two regions working with similar social groups and on similar themes were clubbed together, with an aim to facilitate cross sharing and learning not just on



programmatic work, but also on the challenges being faced and the strategies being employed by the partners.

### **Planning by social group, thematic and functions' teams at the national level**

After participating in the national reviews, the national social group and theme leaders and lead persons of support functions sit with their teams and prepare their plans, which are integrated into the country plans and budget as priorities for the year ahead.

### **Sharing with the national board**

An overview of the national plan along with the broad contours of programme focus is then shared with the ActionAid India National Board for eliciting and incorporating their inputs and feedback.

### **Submission of country plans and budget to AA international**

The country plan and budget is then finalized taking into account the external context, the internal organization processes and the thematic/social group priorities for the year ahead. A draft plan is then submitted to AA International for eliciting their feedback. After incorporation of the suggestions, the annual plan is finalised and uploaded on the HIVE and ALPS tracker.

### **Desk review and approval**

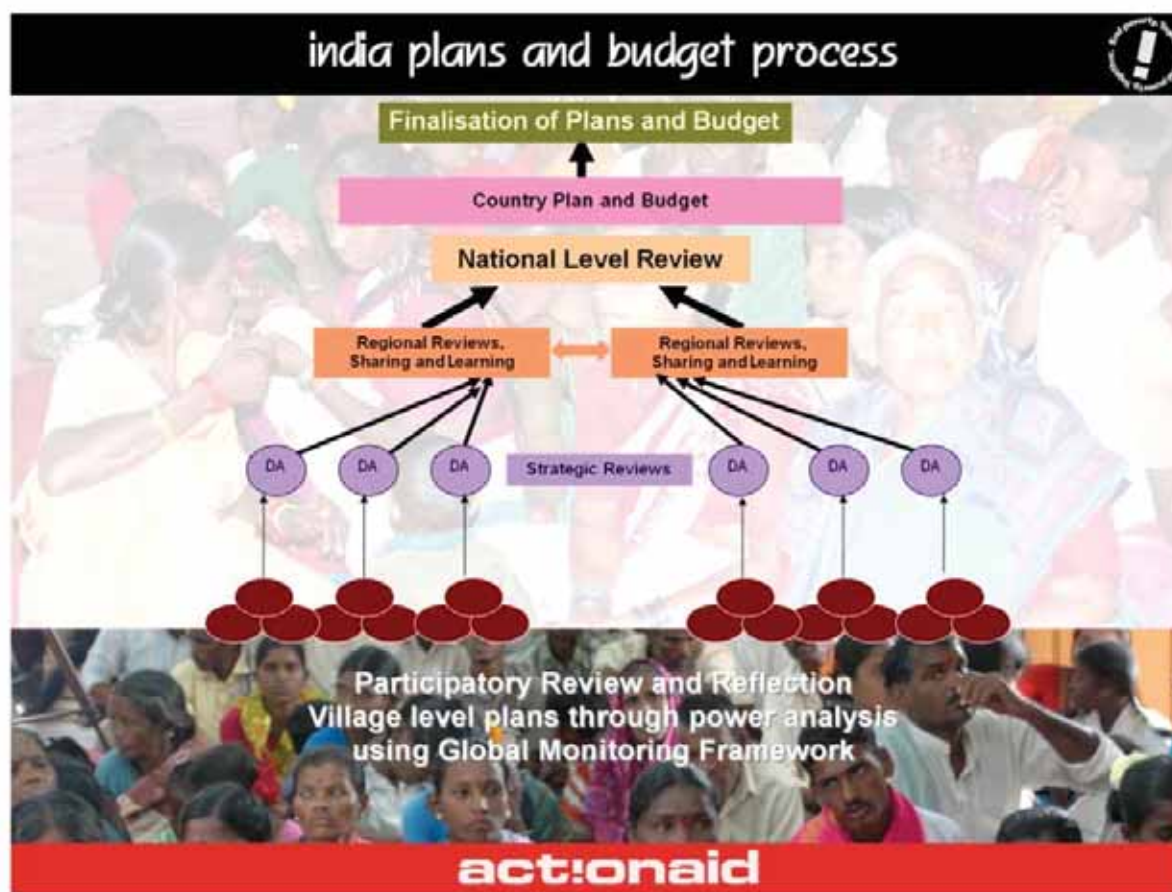
The DA/DI partners and regional team are requested to rework their plans based on the feedback received from regional and national level consultations. Each plan is reviewed again by the Programmes Unit. Following this, the plans and budget documents are approved by the Programme Director and sent to the partners. The process helps enhance synergy and maximize impact at local, regional and national levels.



*Children and women sharing their plans in the national P&B reviews*

## TIME LINE

Process	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Sharing of DA/DI income projections with regions and partners							
Sharing of P&B guidelines by Programmes Unit							
Distribution of guidance notes from thematic and social group units							
Community consultations							
Consolidation of the village, block plans to derive the DA/DI plans and budget							
Review and planning at the regional level							
National plans and budget review							
Submission of final DA/DI plans and budget							
Collation and compilation of National P&B							
Feedback from National Board							
Submission to AA International (draft for feedback and revision thereafter)							
Approval of DA/DI plans and budget and dissemination to regions and then to partners							





## Glimpses of achievements during 2008-2009

The P&B process 2009 highlighted the progress and achievements, which helped us to take stock and reflect on our journey towards facilitating grounding of tangible rights and realizing our CSP goal of alliance of the marginalized.

### Convergence of Social groups Alliances - Towards an Alliance of the Marginalized

Conscientisation, organization and mobilization of the communities is a must to strengthen the alliance of the poor and the marginalized communities in order to build counter hegemony and bring in new ideological debates.

During 2008-2009 efforts were made to strengthen national level alliances of tribals, dalits, muslims and fisherfolk. A national working group for dalit rights has been formed which is leading the dalit alliance. The Bharatiya Muslim Mahila Andolan has expanded its membership to 20,000 muslim women in 15 states. Similarly, the Adim Janajati Adhikar Manch (AJAM) has been successful in large scale mobilization of most vulnerable tribes from across 11 states and is campaigning against the issues of tribal displacement and destruction of their livelihoods. The coastal communities (fisherfolks) of five States and one Union Territory in India are united, with the slogan being "Sea our Life, Coast our Right", and contributed to the national level platform protesting against government efforts to encroach on their customary rights to the sea and the coast. Major success of this platform has been that it forced the government to scrap Coastal Zone Management (CZM) notification that proposed to replace the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) notification with a number of amendments highly detrimental to the rights of coastal communities. Similarly, the platform contributed to the National Coastal Women's Movement, spread over seven coastal states and taking forward the issues of coastal women's rights, and the ANWORD (Act now for Women's Rights in Disasters) forum, which has further spread to the neighbouring countries like Srilanka and Bangladesh.

<b>Glimpses of Achievements against tangible rights during 2008-09</b>			
<b>Food, livelihood and employment</b>		<b>Education and Child Rights</b>	
NREGA Job Card holder get work	143530	Number of schools activated	685
No. of families received ration cards for subsidized food	175772	Number of schools start serving lunch	2428
No. of families got land titles	11174	Number of boys and girls enrolled in schools	Boys – 35097 Girls - 20798
No. of Women who got land	8428	No. of Child labours going to school	451
No. of family file claims for land titles (Forest land)	109995	<b>Other social security Entitlements</b>	
Forest land claimed (in acres)	118077	No. of people received Old age pension support	15134
Individual land entitlements (in acres)	10197	No. of widows start receiving state support	5702
No. of PDS made functional	662	Women received Maternity benefit	4824
No. of ICDS centers mobilized	1036	People with disability received pension	5876
<b>5.7 million person days of work mobilized under NREGA generating wages to the tune of 7.4 million GBP</b>		No. of urban poor get voting cards	71149
		<b>Right to Health</b>	
		Number of health centres activated	172
		Number of PLHAs accessing VCTCs	2157
		Number of PLHAs accessing ARVs	591



## Planning in 2009: Some Highlights

### Participation of General Assembly Members

A unique feature of the planning process in 2009 was the participation of members of ActionAid Association's General Assembly. The members added a lot of value to the process by sharing their experiences and struggles on the ground. The General Assembly of ActionAid in India has many prominent people drawn from the different social groups that we work with.



During the planning and review exercise in Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh this year, Ramvati<sup>2</sup>, who is member of the General Assembly and who is an activist from the Sahariya tribal community, shared her experience at the SAAPE (South Asia Alliance for Poverty Eradication) meeting in Kathmandu in Nepal. Ramvati shared about her journey from being an extremely shy woman to her current position where she leads a very difficult battle against generations of prejudice suffered by her community.

"I couldn't follow the language spoken at SAPPE, and demanded an interpreter. I shared in Hindi that the main struggle today is that of land. I also expressed my concerns about the way States are driving us tribals away from our homeland. We need more vigorous efforts to strengthen our platform AJAM (Adim Janajati Adhikar Manch); then only we shall be able to stop the state from engaging in such unjust and indiscriminate practices" said Ramvati.

### Participation of colleagues from the international

The planning process in 2009 witnessed the participation of two senior colleagues from ActionAid International - Mr. Adriano Campolina, ActionAid's International Director for the Americas and Theme Leader, food rights; and Mr. Stanley Arumugam, International Director for Organisation Effectiveness - and also a 3-member team from ActionAid Kenya.



"I must say that I learnt a lot and am going back with a number of examples of in-depth practice of the HRBA, strong organisation of the poor and excluded, intense critical engagement with the state, and more importantly, very clear changes in the power relations in all communities that I visited and finally a transformation in the lives of the rights-holders... I am already using the lessons learnt to influence the planning process elsewhere."

Adriano Campolina, International Director for the Americas and Theme Leader, food rights, on Planning Process in India

<sup>2</sup> Ramvati belongs to the Sahariya tribal group, the community which is identified by the government as one of the most vulnerable tribal groups in India. ActionAid India started work with this community in the Shivpuri district of Madhya Pradesh during 2002-2003 when starvation deaths of over 300 Sahariyas were reported from this area.

Last few years of intense organization and mobilization work with this community has resulted in the emergence of a regional level platform called SAJAG (Sahariya Jan Gathbandhan or Sahariya People's Awareness Alliance) and many powerful and vocal community leaders like Ramvati. A confident proponent of Sahariya rights, Ramvati has been leading the battle against generations of prejudice suffered by her community.

## Community-led budgeting



In an innovative experiment in 2009, Chahat Hai Jine Ki<sup>3</sup>, a DA partner from western India encouraged the community women to not only plan the programmes but also prepare the budgets as part of the community planning process. Women representatives from the community successfully presented their budget at the regional and national review meetings.

It was interesting to note that when community members did the budgeting, the amounts requested for were far less than what the partner organisation had proposed. **"No need to provide for food. We'll eat at home before starting for the meetings. After all it's our own struggle! The amount could be put to better use – like buying buckets for storing water at the community centre,"** said the women representatives.

## Peer reviews

**"This is a very good process as it enables us to learn from each other's work and successes and failures. The process also gives us an opportunity to form issue-based alliances. I'm glad to see that the very issues that we face feature in others' plans as well."**

- Hazara Mallick, community leader from Orissa.

In year 2008, ActionAid India introduced the practice of 'peer review' into the planning and budgeting process at the DA level. As part of the practice, one partner working with a particular social group or theme reviews the plans and budget of another partner, working with a similar social group or theme. Most partners welcomed this initiative stating that it helped them learn from the work of other partners engaging with similar issues.

This year, the peer review sessions witnessed far higher enthusiasm and extraordinary vibrancy. To cite an example, during the plans and budget session at Bhopal, the peer review process was quite rich with spirited deliberations by partners from three states.

The partners claimed that the peer reviews provided them with an opportunity to identify common issues, seek support from and complement each other's work. This helped strengthen their networking and alliance building process.

Another distinctive feature of the peer reviews in 2009 was the participation of community members in the process. The community members posed series of questions to the partners on budgetary aspects. For example, one of the partners asked another as to why their monthly provisioning for fuel and maintenance of motorbikes was higher than theirs, especially when they both worked in similar area and terrain.

## Participation by fundraising and sponsorship

The global financial meltdown in 2008 made us pause and weigh the adverse impact it could have on our work and the support from our child sponsors. Besides revisiting the 2009

<sup>3</sup> Chahat hai Jine Ki which means 'desire to live' is an initiative by ActionAid and Prayatn attempting to reverse the trend of adverse sex ratio in two districts, Morena and Dholpur, in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan respectively.



budget, we vouched to strengthen the quality of our performance in 2009 with regard to child sponsorship, as also find ways of mobilizing new and additional resources to continue our work.

Accordingly, care was taken to involve colleagues from the two units of child sponsorship and fundraising in all national level planning and review sessions in 2009.

Special meetings were held between the fundraising unit and regional teams to not only identify programmes that have the potential to attract funds, but also explore new avenues of raising funds within the country. Colleagues from the sponsorship unit met with regional teams separately to press home the importance of giving the unique ActionAid touch to our child sponsorship work in India.

### **Prioritisation of areas for fundraising**

As already stated, the interfacing between fundraising colleagues and programme staff and partners made it possible to spot those programmes that have a strong potential of attracting funds.

Programmatic work having a focus on women and land rights, food sovereignty, sustainable agriculture and climate change, universalisation of quality school education and primary health care were identified as having higher potential to generate funds. It was decided that efforts would be made to upscale such work and properly document and show case them.





## Our National Plan Priority for 2010-11

This enriched process of P&B exercise helped us to draw up our national plan priority for 2010-11.

"Our national priority for 2010-11 will be to achieve food sovereignty. We will not allow malnutrition and starvation in the geographical areas we work in. We will push for nutritious food for children, women and men of the excluded communities. We will access all the eight government schemes guaranteed by the Supreme Court for this purpose. An integral part of our struggle will be to get land for all excluded households in the name of women and a support system for sustainable food production. We will mobilize and organize people through all peaceful means that we can summon in order to access fully hundred days of employment under the National rural employment guarantee law."

**Each social group has identified priority intervention area and programme of action in order to support the above national priority and these are as follows:**

The **Tribal** social group while strive for preserving tribal identity and oppose displacement which is leading to ruination, destitution and near extinction of tribal people will lead the struggle for land, natural resources and food sovereignty including access to education with mid day meals at school for all tribal children.

The **Dalit** social group while exposing untouchability, atrocities and denial of dignity will struggle for the right to land, the right to life with dignity, the right to quality and equitable education.

The **Muslim** social group while affirming their Indianness will expose stereotyping, oppose perpetuation of communal hatred and highlight the multiple forms of exclusion they are subjected to will struggle for the right to work, food security, education and full citizenship.

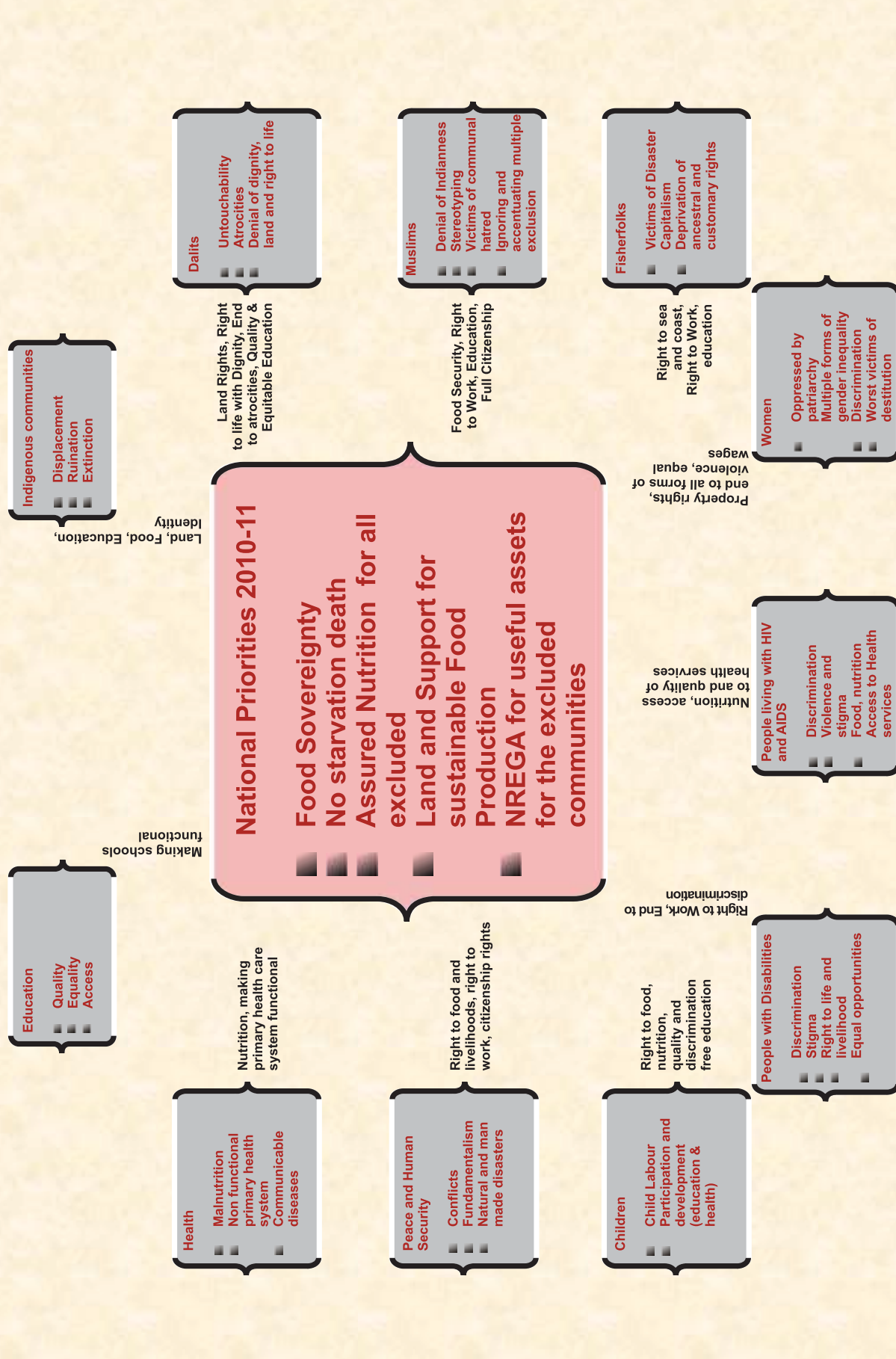
The **fisherfolk** will expose the disaster capitalism, mechanizations and above all the continuing attempt to deprive them of their ancestral homestead along the coast line and they will struggle for sustainable fishing rights, which guarantees rich protein for millions of the marginalized along with the struggle for the right to livelihood for women and education for children.

The **women** social group while exposing patriarchy and violence against women will knit together the struggles of women in all the excluded social groups for land and employment with dignity and good schooling for their children without any gender discrimination.

We will work with **people living with HIV and AIDS** and **people with disabilities** to oppose the discrimination and stigma faced by them and supports their struggle for dignity and right to work and livelihood.

We will work with **children** to promote child rights components - their protection, participation and development - while working towards ending all forms of child labour and mainstreaming all out of school children into schools.

# ActionAid India - National Priorities 2010-11



## **Responsive to the external context and emerging needs**

There are occasions when changes in the external environment threaten to affect the work of the organisation, or the external context makes pressing demands on the organisation. The elaborate planning process in India involving a wide range of actors and agencies provides an excellent scope to analyze the emerging needs at length and formulate appropriate responses to such needs.

For example, the planning process in 2009 took note of the severe drought imminent in large parts of the country on account of reduced rainfall, and deliberated on how ActionAid could respond to the emergency and charted out various strategies that could be employed to cope with the crisis.

### **Responding to National Drought 2009**

India now faces a country-wide drought that is second most acute in less than 10 years. As many as 278 out of 626 districts have been declared drought-hit. Going by the predictions on climate change, monsoon failure of this kind will become more and more frequent and severe in the coming years. Keeping this in mind and taking advantage of the presence of international Director, Americas and theme leader, food rights, Mr. Adriano Campolina, the planning process in Lucknow included a special session on 'drought and food security rights'. The session deliberated on how ActionAid could respond to the impending drought situation and chart out various strategies that need to be adopted to cope with the crisis.

Community leaders and representatives from partner organisations from the Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Jharkhand, amongst the 11 worst-hit states, participated in the discussion. The case of Bundelkhand, a region which has frequently hit national headlines for being affected time and again, was analysed at length.

The session witnessed a critiquing of the criteria on the basis of which the government declares an area drought-affected. It was pointed out that the existing criteria focuses on the volume of rainfall only, and ignores the erratic nature of rain which has a strong bearing on agriculture and can make an area drought prone.

Adriano stated that drought is emerging as a world wide crisis and is going to be there not just every year and also for most part of year. With growing number of landlords and companies setting their greedy eyes on key resources like land, water and seed, the situation is going to be worse. Having a robust and long term strategy to deal with drought therefore is highly imperative. It was decided that a national level consultation would be organized soon to chart out medium- and long-term strategies to deal with the phenomenon of poor rain. The broad plans that emerged out of the session were:

#### **At the local / community level**

- Organise and mobilise people through REFLECT circles
- Promote people-driven advocacy for ensuring:
  - o Effective implementation of NREGA<sup>4</sup> and eight food-security related schemes as announced by the Supreme Court
  - o Universal access to safe drinking water
  - o Effective implementation of Public Distribution System.

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<sup>4</sup> National Rural Employment Guarantee Act promises 100 days of work in a year to poor families in rural India.



- Support and promote formation of grain banks
- Promote Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) planning at the village level
- Advocate with Panchayats/ Gram Sabhas (village councils) to implement DRR plans
- Lobby with NREGA planners to build infrastructure that can help mitigate the adverse effect of drought
- Take up research for identifying alternative and sustainable models of water management, agriculture, seed conservation and other mechanisms that can be sustained by communities at their level

### At the Policy Level

- Advocate for
  - o Relief packages that will suit the 'poor and marginal' and not the rich farmers
  - o Relief plans that, instead of being uniform, address regional diversity and local needs
  - o Need-based relief allocation (state and central) based on community-developed budget estimates
  - o More than 100 days of work under NREGA in drought-prone areas
  - o Recognition/ mainstreaming of community based solutions/ alternatives
  - o Revival of traditional structures of water harvesting.
  - o Link up with institutions and intellectuals, agro-economists etc
  - o Banning of genetically modified (GM) seeds
- Strengthen advocacy efforts with evidence-based research: do reality-checks as to why schemes are failing to yield the desired result; collect evidences, testimonies and case studies
- Muster solidarity from resource institutions, intellectuals and agro-economists to increase clout



### Some feedback on other fallouts of P&B process

#### Capacity building of community and partners

"The Review Process provides a great opportunity to learn and grow. Engagement with it has been a great experience"

Rural Volunteer Center (RVC), ActionAid Partner, Guwahati region

While sharing their plans at the national review and planning process, community leaders, partners, and their staff members are encouraged to lead the discussions. The process is highly appreciated by our partners and their staff, as the scope to exchange ideas not only helps widen the horizon of their world view, it also helps sharpen their critical thinking and build their confidence.

#### Inspiring community

"If there's one thing that we fear the most, it's mass mobilisation."

- A senior police officer and a very powerful corrupt and criminal political leader from Uttar Pradesh

Countering the nexus amongst feudal lords, greedy and exploitative market forces, an oppressive State and divisive fundamentalist forces is no mean task and can often result in ghastly backlashes and atrocities against communities. This can be quite discouraging, dampening the spirits behind the fight for equity and social justice.

Coming together and sharing of experiences helps the community members realise that they are not alone in their struggle, but are, in fact, part of a much larger struggle being waged all over the country by different people and groups on almost similar issues. The planning process thus helps boost the confidence and morale of the poor and marginalised people.

#### Promotes cultural exchange

Most sessions are interspersed with cultural exchanges of songs and folklores. Vibrant and inspirational in nature, the lyrics demand rights and justice to the poor and marginalized. Community members participate with full zest and charm, making the atmosphere live and energized.

#### Informing staff on programmatic challenges

The plans and budget exercises also present an opportunity to colleagues from various support units like HR and Finance to learn about programmes on the ground. Interfaces with partners and community leaders help them realise the difficulties and problems faced at the partners and regional level, and identify HR or finance related issues that might need careful attention from their units.

To cite an example, during 2009, it was pointed out that due to the geo-political situation in the North East, some of the standard financial norms and practices are difficult to adhere to. In some of the areas it takes two days to reach a bank and therefore payment by cheque is not a very feasible proposition. At the same time, because of security reasons no agency provides cash insurance in the region. As a result, ActionAid staff and partners face a lot of difficulties in ensuring timely remittance of funds. Deliberation on the issue at the forum helped the team members come up with a solution – using the post office for fund remittance.

## **Programme Priorities for 2010** **(As emerging from Plans and Budget 2009)**

- Promoting sustainable agriculture and enhancing food sovereignty
- Guaranteeing employment for all who need it
- Securing the rights of women to land and property
- Making sure all children have access to free and quality education
- Making the primary health centres fully functional
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- Putting a dent in rising fundamentalism and communalism
- Reducing threats to human rights activists
- Stepping up efforts to mobilise new and additional resources
- Sustaining child sponsorship links by improving communication between sponsored children and foster parents



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## **End poverty. Together.**

ActionAid works with poor and excluded people in 24 States and 1 Union Territory in India and over 50 countries worldwide to end poverty and injustice. Together we claim legal, constitutional and moral rights to food and livelihood, shelter, education, healthcare, dignity and a voice in decisions that affect their lives.

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