



ActionAid USA Country Strategy Paper 2025-2028

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Our Vision, Mission & Values

Our Vision

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

Our Mission

To realize social justice, gender equality, and poverty eradication by partnering with people on the frontlines of poverty and injustice, their communities, grassroots organizations, activists, social movements, and supporters - globally and within our own contexts.

Our Core Values

ActionAid embraces feminist leadership as necessary to moving our mission forward. We define feminist leadership as the positive and inclusive use of power to build an organization capable of changing the world. Feminist leadership informs and guides our core values, theory of change, and objectives.

1. **Mutual Respect:** We recognize the innate worth of all people and strive to embody intersectional feminist leadership principles.
2. **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:** We are committed to being an anti-racist organization. We work to realize our vision for everyone, regardless of gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, caste, class, age, health status, ability, location, and religion, and to deepen our understanding of systemic racism and intersectionality.
3. **Integrity:** We strive to be honest, transparent, and accountable with all internal and external stakeholders regarding the effectiveness of our actions and our use of resources, and to be open in our judgments and communications.
4. **Solidarity:** We commit to being rooted within communities on frontlines of poverty and injustice as we build a just, equitable, and sustainable world.
5. **Courage of Conviction:** We seek to be creative, bold, and innovative in tackling the symptoms of unequal power (poverty, hunger, gender-based violence, climate change, conflict, and disaster) and in challenging the ideologies, systems, and norms that lie underneath.
6. **Independence:** We are guided by facts, science, and the needs of communities, and we will develop and maintain procedures to avoid undue influence. We are also free of any religious or party-political affiliation.
7. **Humility:** We recognize that we are part of a wider alliance against systemic poverty and injustice.

Who We Are

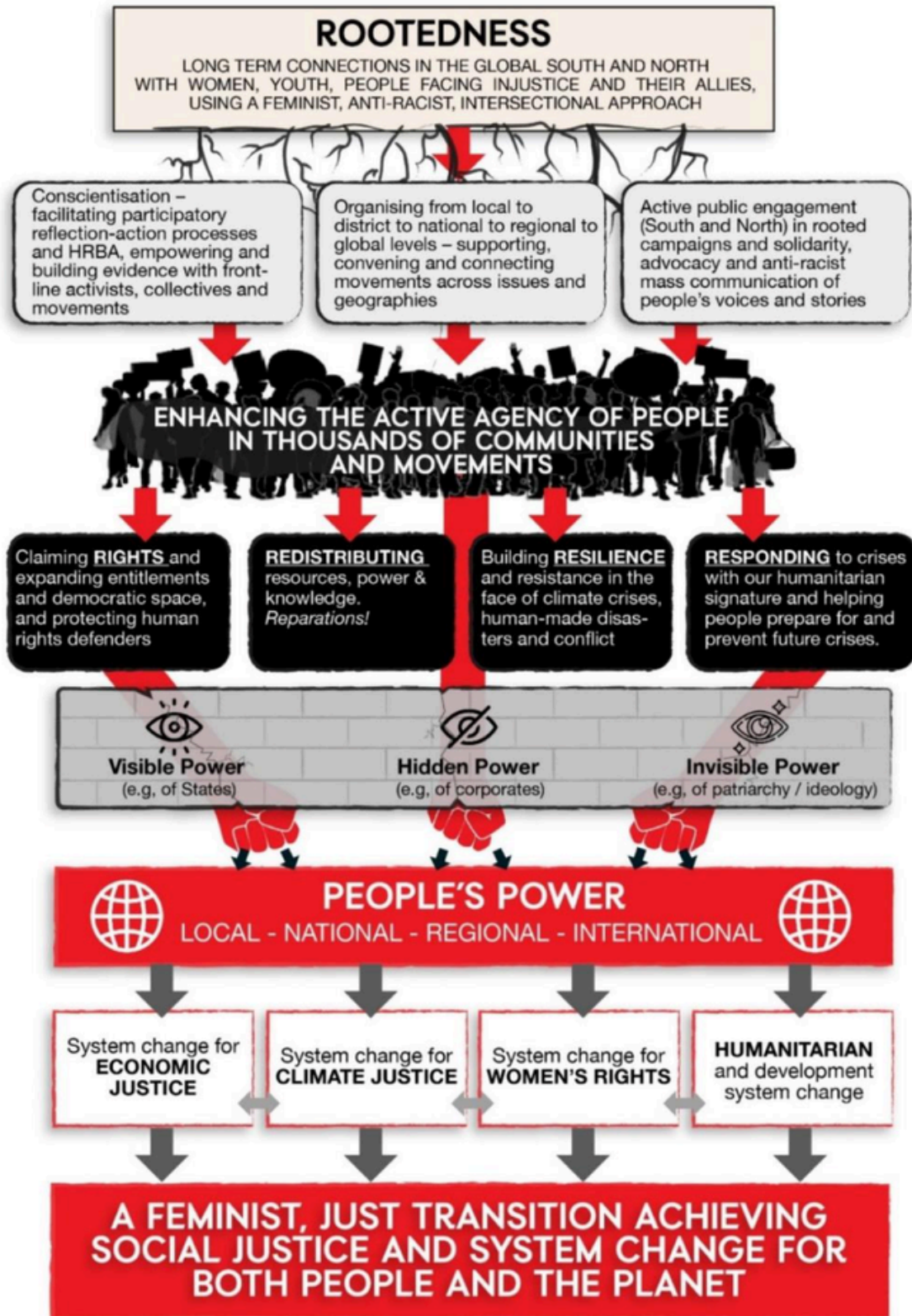
ActionAid USA is a member of the ActionAid International federation, a network of locally rooted organizations dedicated to social justice, poverty eradication, and gender equality in over 70 countries. ActionAid's work strengthens the agency of people living in poverty and exclusion to assert their rights and overcome the structural causes of inequality and injustice. We partner with people's movements and grassroots leaders to develop holistic, community-led solutions to their most pressing challenges; support collective action to see those solutions implemented; and hold duty-bearers to account.

ActionAid was founded as a charity in London in 1972 and, over time, has innovated and evolved our approach to better address the structural drivers of poverty and injustice. In the 1990s, we adopted a human rights-based approach to development, which we continue to apply. In 2003, we established the ActionAid International federation, comprising members in every region of the world, and headquartered in South Africa. In 2018, we launched a 10-year strategy, Action for Global Justice, which represents the next step in our evolution, rooting us more deeply in the communities where we work, and with the people whose rights and visions we seek to realize. Today, ActionAid is a globally recognized leader in supporting women's rights and social movements, as well as local campaigns for climate justice, food security, food sovereignty, and land and natural resource rights. The federation works towards ensuring a just and feminist transition through a rooted campaigning model (see figure 1).

ActionAid USA works to advance ActionAid's shared mission through domestic and global policy efforts and by mobilizing funds in support of ActionAid programs around the world. Specifically, we:

- **Bring a global justice perspective to domestic policy work in the United States.** This is focused on international issues and how the U.S. interacts with the rest of the world, but an important secondary goal is to support movement work to build a more just society within the United States.
- **Provide thought leadership in domestic and international policy spaces** that is grounded in justice and equity, leveraging federation-wide experience in locally rooted work.
- **Build solidarity between marginalized communities in the United States and around the world,** and facilitate the engagement of those voices in organizing, movement-building, and connection with progressive policymakers.
- **Raise funds for the ActionAid federation's work** and share our locally rooted development model with our supporters and the U.S.-based funding community.

Figure 1: ActionAid’s program signature



Our Theory of Change

ActionAid USA's key role is to build power among U.S. movements for radical change that includes internationalism and global justice as core principles, especially in the context of a U.S. government that increasingly inflicts injustice and violence on the world through rhetoric, policy, and practice.

Globally, the world is facing a series of intersecting crises that have worsened even as the deaths from the COVID pandemic have lessened. Climate impacts have increased significantly and, considering the lack of progress on stopping fossil fuels, will continue to intensify globally, including extreme heat, drought, sea level rise, and extreme weather disasters. This contributes to the second crisis, an economic one, which continues to grow with skyrocketing costs of living, worsening extreme inequality, and many countries facing unsustainable debt. Debt service payments are bankrupting low-income countries, and an estimated 85% of the world is now living under some form of austerity driven by colonial institutions. Finally, democracy itself is increasingly under threat, from corporate interests buying elections, the rise of open fascism, and increasing conflict. Threats to democracy are directly linked to other crises: from climate change leading to increased cross-border migration and reactionary anti-immigrant politics in recipient countries, to economic inequality leading to increased appeal of right-wing populist demagoguery.

In many ways, these trends are central to politics in the United States right now. Fascist elements have been strengthened domestically in recent years, and the basic rules of constitutional democracy are being challenged. Basic norms of governance, including the rule of law, separation of powers, freedom of speech and dissent, a nonpartisan civil service, support for science and health research, and the provision of basic public services, are all under threat and are breaking down.

The U.S. is also clearly retreating from even basic multilateralism, shuttering its entire foreign assistance apparatus, withdrawing from multilateral agreements and institutions, such as the Paris Agreement and the World Health Organization, conducting undeclared warfare on the flimsiest of rationales, and abandoning long-time allies in favor of authoritarian states. At home, climate impacts are worsening, and yet scientists are being silenced, states are under attack for their climate policies, and assistance is being held hostage to partisan demands. Meanwhile, worsening inequality and concentrated power in corporate players have left middle- and working-class Americans economically vulnerable and insecure. We can and must use the next few years to build support for an equitable and inclusive vision of the United States, including for its role in the global system.

Unfortunately, even as the U.S. retreats from multilateralism, its policies have an outsized impact on people around the world. This is most obvious in aid cuts and military violence, both of which have directly claimed lives and will continue to do so. But abusive U.S. foreign policies, economic policies, and climate policies indirectly destroy lives and livelihoods as well.

ActionAid USA's role is to shift power in the U.S. to change these unjust policies; **our domestic work is always primarily aimed at ensuring justice for people and communities in the Global South.** That said, the need to build solidarity across borders, as well as our own moral conscience, demands that we also work towards justice for oppressed people and communities in the United States in parallel.

As a global federation, ActionAid believes that lasting change will only come when the current unequal distribution of power is rebalanced toward communities and those facing poverty and injustice. We believe in the power of people to change systems, and that our work must be rooted in feminist and decolonial approaches. This is at the heart of our rooted campaigning model, which both empowers people and drives structural change (see figure 1). We do not believe direct advocacy with the current administration is fruitful, as they are not listening to voices outside their own narrow ideological boundaries, or to anyone unwilling to perform and pay (sometimes literally) fidelity to the president and his inner circle.

In the short term, we will support building outrage amongst civil society and opposition elected officials to help create an organized resistance. Our long-term strategy is to redirect the outrage towards building the alternative version of the world that we want – a socially and economically just, equitable, environmentally sustainable, feminist future. Far-right populism is showing us very clearly that the status quo is unsustainable, and that a continued commitment to neoliberalism from political elites in the Global North leads to fascist backlash. We can and must use the next few years to build support for an equitable and inclusive vision of the United States, including for its role in the global system.

We see three roles for us as an organization in building the necessary people power to achieve that goal: standing in solidarity with movements, articulating and sharing a vision for a more just world and how that can be realized, and, when timely, engaging with progressive champions.

- **Solidarity with movements and public education**, here in the U.S. and around the world. We do this by connecting impacted movements here with impacted people in other parts of the world, enabling the sharing of knowledge and experiences and building a deeper understanding of common struggles. We will also look to support movement organizing, especially capacity-building, whenever possible.
- Beyond mere resistance to the forces unleashing chaos and harm in the U.S., there is also a need to **build, articulate, and share widely an alternative vision for the world.** Reactionary and oppressive forces are seeking to capitalize on the instability resulting from extreme imbalances in wealth, control over natural resources, and power to further entrench this instability. We can counter this by developing and socializing concrete proposals for a social contract that works for people and planet.
- Finally, as conditions allow, we will seek to build on the work with movements by **engaging key progressive policymakers** to build up champions (both as lawmakers and communicators).

Our Work

ActionAid's overall priority themes are climate justice, economic justice, women's rights, and humanitarian system change. In the U.S., our policy and campaigning work will focus on building radical alternative internationalist visions in the areas of climate justice and economic justice. Through fundraising and communications, we will support federation advocacy on women's rights and humanitarian response.

Under the current political climate, we will need to ally with broader movements in the U.S. in reinforcing fundamental principles of democracy and the key role of government in providing essential public services, as these ideals are increasingly under attack. **Our ultimate goal is to ensure that U.S. policies do not harm vulnerable and oppressed communities in the Global South, and our focus on U.S. domestic organizing is always aimed at this longer-term goal.**

Given that the Trump administration and (at least for the initial two years) Republican-controlled Congress are extremely hostile to virtually all of our policy priorities, we will use most of our staff time and resources towards:

1. selected damage control work in key policy spaces; and
2. grassroots public and movement education to build support for alternative visions, using the extremism of the Trump administration as a way to engage potential activists and supporters.

We will continue our engagement in spaces where we have strong existing experience, relationships, and networks, but be open to broadening our base to include a wider swath of U.S. grassroots organizations in particular.



Climate Justice

ActionAid USA's engagement on climate justice has historically focused on ensuring that the necessary resources flow from rich countries like the United States to vulnerable communities in the Global South, supporting resilience-building, climate adaptation, and recovery from climate impacts. In many cases, communities know what needs to be done to respond to climate impacts - they simply need the resources, most obviously money. As the world's largest historical emitter of greenhouse gas emissions and one of the world's wealthiest countries, the United States has a unique obligation to provide this money, known as "climate finance" in UN parlance.

While this is our core work on climate justice, we also work to ensure communities are not harmed by land grabs for bioenergy or by other false climate solutions, such as carbon markets. We have a secondary focus on financial institutions (such as banks, asset managers, and retirement funds) and on how their investments in fossil fuels, industrial agriculture, and land fuel the climate crisis.

ActionAid engages in domestic public education and power-building to strengthen political demand for global climate justice more broadly and for the provision of climate finance more specifically. We also conduct advocacy at the UN and U.S. government levels as needed. In the U.S., our team's work includes:

- **Organizing domestically** to build a broader base of support for demands for international climate justice. Even with a president and Congress that were more supportive of climate solutions than what exists in the current strategy period, we were unable to secure significant U.S. money delivered to multilateral climate funds like the Green Climate Fund. The root of the problem is that there is insufficient political pressure for climate finance. We engage in ongoing public education, particularly within the U.S. climate movement and related movements, to build a deeper understanding of the importance of global climate solutions and climate finance, and therefore stronger political pressure for these solutions in the future. One flagship effort will be our ongoing Global Climate Reparations Camp (CRC) for youth, where we educate young leaders and organizers about global climate justice and help them connect these concepts to their day-to-day organizing across different issues and constituencies.
- **Building links between climate and migrant justice** to expand the base of support for international climate justice, as well as to stand in solidarity with immigrant communities under direct attack by the federal government. We have found that migrant and diaspora communities have a naturally internationalist viewpoint on issues like the climate crisis, which is exactly what we need to build a broader base of support to demand global climate justice. Deepening connections between these two movements (including through CRC, from which we recruit heavily from migrant and diaspora communities) supports our broader goals and enables us to directly support some of the most vulnerable members of our community domestically.

- **Advocating at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) negotiations** and related spaces to push for stronger climate finance commitments from developed countries for mitigation, adaptation, and loss & damage activities, and to ensure that funds that do flow are democratically governed rather than donor-driven and are accountable to the needs of communities. This work also dovetails with our economic justice work by focusing on advocating for public, grant-based, new and additional climate finance, rather than finance flowing from the private sector or as debt-creating loans. Increasingly, advocacy for tax justice and debt justice, through international fora such as the proposed new UN Framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation and a possible future UN Framework Convention on Sovereign Debt, may also be integrated into our climate finance push.
- **Fighting against the control of land by asset managers and the wealthy** and in favor of land rights for communities. Land rights for women, Indigenous Peoples, and marginalized communities are central to the right to climate, food, and economic justice. Contingent on funds raised to continue these efforts, we will work to reduce our dependence on industrial food systems controlled by the few, which harm the planet. We will work to scale up agroecological food systems that protect the climate and the environment, and enable the right to food.



Economic Justice

ActionAid connects movements to challenge debt and austerity measures that have failed people and to propose alternatives that are progressive and gender responsive. In the past, advocacy has focused on moving developed countries, including the U.S., to increase climate and development finance, support international debt workout mechanisms, and push for global tax justice. With the U.S. withdrawing from many of these spaces, alternative approaches are needed. As such, ActionAid USA will focus on:

- **Developing an alternate vision for international financial reform** in light of the U.S. abandoning multilateral spaces: Although the precise extent of the U.S. departure from international financial mechanisms is not yet clear, there are signs (i.e., Project 2025 proposals) that the U.S. may completely withdraw from some funding systems while doubling down on U.S. dominance in others. Therefore, we must understand the potential geopolitical shifts as Western aid systems diminish and how to reform the global financial system so it benefits climate-vulnerable countries. The U.S. no longer participating could create opportunities for other countries to develop strong global policies on debt justice and tax justice, as ways to both relieve fiscal distress and generate revenue domestically over the medium-term, such as the UN Framework Conventions mentioned above. At the same time, if the U.S. asserts dominance in spaces where it has a larger voting share (e.g., the International Monetary Fund), we will also need to defend against backsliding on climate and gender policies. We envision bringing allies together to develop bold proposals, socialize those proposals, and build support to make them real.
- **Maintaining Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) in international financial reform efforts:** SDRs are a powerful tool to help relieve debt distress in developing countries. Past advocacy efforts focused on convincing the U.S. and European countries to issue a new allocation since many developing countries are facing an unprecedented debt crisis. Over time, the rules must also be reformed to ensure that future allocations can help stabilize the global economy. Without the U.S., however, the likelihood of achieving a new allocation or reform is very low. Nevertheless, it is essential to maintain SDRs in the range of options that countries in the U.S. system are currently considering for international financial reform. We remain focused on retaining the gains made in the last strategy period, in particular the proposals on the SDRs playbook, as a more medium-term signal of the types of reforms that are required.

Women's Rights

ActionAid's women's rights work focuses on building feminist alternatives to neoliberalism, expanding decent and dignified work for women, and ending violence against women. Central to all our work on women's rights is a commitment to building feminist movements, with a special focus on people facing intersecting discrimination and exclusion. This involves a range of interventions from popular education to leadership development and expanding space for women in key decision-making structures, from strategic feminist research to being ready to protect women's human rights defenders.

In the U.S., our goal is to advance women's rights and feminist movements. AAUSA works with donors to secure funding for such programs, shares insights with relevant policymakers, and publicizes stories of change and impact with our donors and the broader U.S. community. Ongoing examples of this work include:

- **Scaling Up Public Investment in Agriculture:** This long-standing project focuses on increasing the quantity and quality of public investment in agriculture in Africa, improving the well-being and productivity of women smallholder farmers, their households, and communities. To date, the project has provided capacity-building and support for thousands of women smallholder farmers in Nigeria and across Africa, along with their communities, organizations, and networks, to participate in national, regional, and continental advocacy spaces to demand investment and budget accountability. Hundreds of policymakers have been reached, resulting in commitments to invest in agriculture and women farmers, impacting millions of people across the continent.
- **Young Urban Women:** This project provides strategic support and opportunities for young women living in poverty and exclusion in urban settings to push for tangible policy and program changes in the areas of social, economic, and environmental justice. With work in Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, and at the global level, the project has reached more than 10,000 young women in 22 cities and urban areas. The work harnesses the collective power of young women and their allies to build movements and engage with their governments to demand policy alternatives and gender-responsive public services supporting bodily autonomy and integrity, decent work, access to clean and safe food and water, and gender-just responses to climate change disasters.
- **Feminist Alternatives to Neoliberalism:** This project brings together key thought leaders from the Global South (majority world) to envision and advocate for a feminist alternative to neoliberalism. To date, critiques of, and alternatives to, damaging neoliberalism have been developed primarily by U.S. and European academics, think tanks, funders, politicians, and activists. Yet knowledge and experts from the majority world, whose populations stand to benefit most from a paradigm shift away from neoliberalism, have largely been left out of the conversation. This work brings together key individuals across Africa to propose feminist and just alternatives to neoliberalism and to share those alternatives with decision-makers.

Humanitarian Emergencies

ActionAid responds to conflicts and disasters around the world, working with local partners to ensure our efforts are community-driven and rights-based. We work with youth-led and women-led organizations to build resilience of crisis-affected people and to support recovery and peacebuilding efforts.

When humanitarian crises occur, **AAUSA supports the federation's response efforts** by launching appeals to raise much-needed funds and, as appropriate, advocating to further peacebuilding. Notably, we have responded to the following crises:

- **Gaza Crisis:** We continue to support relief efforts through food distribution, water and sanitation services, and advocacy for a ceasefire and the peaceful self-determination of the Palestinian people. Our response has reached over 400,000 people to date.
- **East Africa Famine:** ActionAid is working with local partners to respond to the prolonged drought by providing emergency food assistance, safe water, livestock feed, sanitation and hygiene support, and counseling.
- **Ukraine Crisis:** Over the past four years, ActionAid has been working with 40 local partners in Poland, Romania, Moldova, and Ukraine to ensure that the needs of all people escaping and enduring conflict in Ukraine receive support and protection.
- **Middle East Crisis:** Military escalation across the region is killing civilians, displacing families, and overwhelming hospitals and essential services. ActionAid is working with local women-led organizations to deliver emergency cash assistance, food, clean water, hygiene supplies, dignity kits, protection support for women and girls, and mental health services for people living through trauma.

As humanitarian emergencies grow in number and intensity during this strategy period and beyond, ActionAid will remain ready to support community-led, rights-based responses to new crises as they arise and resources allow.



Our Organizational Goals

Fundraising

Given the concentration of wealth in the U.S., a major component of ActionAid USA's value add is raising funds to work in the U.S. and across the ActionAid federation. Through our fundraising work, we also aim to support ActionAid country offices and partners in the Global South to build resources and influence, with the ultimate goal of facilitating financial sustainability and sovereignty. ActionAid USA is uniquely positioned within the ActionAid federation to achieve these outcomes. The U.S. continues to be one of the most charitable countries in the world: the latest available data shows that charitable giving in the U.S. reached an all-time high of \$557.16 billion.

With the chaos of the Trump administration, it is unclear where the international development community or ActionAid USA might find itself in the coming months and years. It is possible we will land in a place where individuals, foundations, and corporations are unable or unwilling to donate funds due to fatigue, severe economic constraints, or new, restrictive laws. Alternatively, we may find ourselves in a place where funders are motivated to give at higher levels and more frequently to counter the devastating policy impacts of the Trump administration on domestic and foreign issues. AAUSA, like many other organizations in the U.S., experienced "The Trump Bump" in the years following the 2016 U.S. election as we used the link between domestic and international issues to generate support for our work, despite having no active programs in the U.S. With all of this in mind, AAUSA is working to build fundraising plans for the future we hope to see, while simultaneously recognizing the unpredictable nature of this philanthropic climate. We will:

- **Use our strength in relationship building and across multiple thematic areas** of focus to secure increased, more diverse unrestricted revenue from current and prospective individual and major donors. We plan to continue using digital and in-person channels to offer clear, compelling stories and evidence of change, encouraging our supporters to make financial contributions to help ActionAid fulfill our mission. With continued attention to Donor-Advised Funds, cryptocurrency, and legacy giving, we will remain on the cutting edge of individual fundraising trends.
- **Strengthen foundation and corporate partnerships and explore new avenues** of foundation and corporate funding by building on our existing relationships and knowledge to raise funds. This will include deepening existing foundation partnerships through securing grants across multiple programs and cultivating visibility at all levels; expanding on the corporate program built during the last country strategy to pursue new avenues of funding from aligned corporate partners; and exploring pooled funds and re-granters.
- **Bolster our base of support through tactical communications that build brand awareness** and thought leadership in the areas of focus for ActionAid USA and the federation. This will include speaking boldly on issues that people in the US care about (climate, visible and

invisible emergencies, diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), corporate and government accountability, where other organizations are silent.

AAUSA will also gradually increase reserves over the next four years to ensure at least 3 months of operational reserves in the board's designated fund.

Communications

We plan to build out our communications work in the strategy period to meet the following goals:

- **Amplify ActionAid USA's expert voices across media platforms:** Position the Executive Director and our policy experts as authoritative voices on key issues by securing media placements (proactive and reactive media statements), participating in thought leadership opportunities (op-eds, blogs, insights, and publications), and leveraging digital platforms (social media, podcasts, etc.). To elevate the visibility of ActionAid USA experts, we will develop and implement a robust digital content and social media strategy.
- **Strengthen our brand to deepen donor engagement and drive fundraising:** Strengthen ActionAid USA's brand identity and storytelling to enhance donor engagement, attract new donors and supporters (foundations, individuals, and corporate partners), and drive fundraising. To build a stronger, more engaged community of supporters, funders, and partners, we will establish a clear, consistent communication rhythm that connects people to our work in meaningful ways. We will ensure our outreach is timely, relevant, and action-driven by aligning our messaging with key advocacy moments, funding cycles, and campaign priorities.

Anti-Racism

ActionAid USA will continue to focus on addressing racism, white supremacy, and colonialism both internally and externally.

- **Internally: Anti-racism Audit Process:** We will share the results of our Anti-racism Staff Survey and make recommendations to dismantle any existing racist and colonial structures within our organization. Recommendations may include such approaches as creating staff and/or board positions focused on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, revising organizational structures to address any systemic racism and discrimination within our administrative/financial, human resources, fundraising, communications, and policy work, and/or developing responsive, inclusive, and supportive policies and systems to ensure our staff, board, partners, and community are culturally and personally valued.
- **Externally: Support excluded communities:** We will engage with individuals, organizations, and communities who have historically been, and are currently, excluded and discriminated against. Our policy and advocacy work, fundraising, and communications will seek to fight against systemic and explicit racism and white supremacy, and we will call for justice, equity, and inclusion within our projects and programs.

ActionAid is a global movement of people working together to achieve greater human rights for all and defeat poverty. We believe people in poverty have the power within them to create change for themselves, their families, and their communities. ActionAid is a catalyst for that change.

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