

Your questions answered

What we do

Together with more than 2,000 civil society partners worldwide, we work with and support the poorest and most vulnerable people to fight for and gain their rights to food, shelter, work, basic healthcare and a voice in the decisions that affect their lives. Among them are widows, orphans, the homeless and disabled, people with HIV & AIDS, tribal peoples and religious minorities.

We also champion poor people's rights through international campaigns on food rights, HIV & AIDS and education.

ActionAid's work fighting poverty reached over 20 million people in Africa, Asia and the Americas.

Where we work

ActionAid International works in more than 50 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. The international secretariat is based in South Africa, and operations are organised on a regional basis; managed from Kenya, Thailand and Brazil. Within each region there are a number of countries with an ActionAid office that manages our work there. Some of these also manage ActionAid programmes in bordering countries.

The international functions for finance, policy, organisational development and marketing are based in the UK, and there is a US office in Washington DC for fundraising and influencing purposes.

The founding affiliates of ActionAid International are ActionAid Ireland, ActionAid Brazil, ActionAid Hellas, , ActionAid Italia, ActionAid UK and ActionAid USA. Our sister organisations, Aide et Action and Ayuda en Acción are based in France and Spain respectively.

Who we are accountable to

Our commitment to poor and marginalised people holds us accountable to them for the quality of our work, and that of our partners. In ActionAid we have multiple accountabilities – to donors, the Charity Commission, the Board of Trustees, financial auditors, other staff, partners, governments, communities, and the poor and marginalised people within them.

Accountability – to poor people, especially women and children – is central to our work.

Accountability also to our donors and how we spend their money is something we take very seriously. When appealing for funds we make every effort to be very clear about the purpose for which it is being raised. Through our rigorous monitoring and auditing systems we keep track that money is being spent effectively and efficiently and for the purpose intended.

Very rarely there may be occasion where things like favourable exchange rates or increased efficiencies in our work means that funds raised for a particular purpose are greater than planned. This means we can be even more effective in our fight against poverty by diverting supporters' funds to other priority and under funded areas of work, without jeopardising the original planned activities. We would always alert supporters if this situation arose and seek their permission to divert their donations.

What makes us different

We don't impose solutions, but work with communities over many years to strengthen their own efforts to throw off poverty. We constantly seek new solutions and ask ourselves how we can make the greatest impact with our resources. We make the most of our skills and abilities by working at local, national, regional and international levels. We see poverty as an injustice and poor people as partners in tackling the causes of poverty.

Other things that make us different from other development agencies are:

- our long-term grassroots development approach
- our innovative ways of working on basic education and HIV & AIDS
- our rights-based approach to emergencies
- our peace building and reconciliation work in Africa

- working in partnership with local organisations in developing countries
- our international leadership from developing countries
- the fact that we are not dependent on government funding
- our committed, long-term supporter base
- our lack of religious or political affiliations.

Where our funds come from

Our funds come from a variety of sources, including:

- child sponsorship in Ireland, UK, Italy, and Greece
- contributions from our sister organisations in Spain and France
- appeals, fundraising, and other forms of regular giving
- legacies
- official bodies and international agencies (includes EU, UK government, USAID, UN, World Bank)
- companies, trusts and NGOs
- trading

Are we a political organisation?

ActionAid has no political or religious affiliations, but we are not afraid to challenge injustice. We work with poor and marginalised people to influence and lobby governments and international institutions like the World Bank, to tackle the causes of poverty, and raise public awareness about the causes of poverty.

We believe that governments are responsible for building the legislative, political and administrative frameworks needed to promote and fulfil people's basic rights so we encourage poor people to hold their national and local governments to account.

We also work with governments, locally and nationally, to help them build their knowledge and skills so that they can fight poverty effectively in their own countries and international arenas.

Can you volunteer overseas?

ActionAid does not send volunteers overseas, preferring to employ local people wherever possible. We work with local partner organisations at grassroots level.

We do, however, occasionally have opportunities for volunteers in Ireland. Volunteers can help us maximise our efficiency, achieve our aims and bring new skills, experience and perspectives to our work. At the same time we believe that volunteering can offer valuable training and work experience, as well as a chance to directly contribute to our work.