



# Action for Social Justice

STRATEGY  
**2023**

## **Action for Social Justice: Strategy 2023**

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# Acronyms

<b>AAI</b>	ActionAid International
<b>AAN</b>	ActionAid Nepal
<b>FY</b>	Fiscal Year
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>HRBA</b>	Human Rights-Based Approach
<b>MEL</b>	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
<b>MoE</b>	Ministry of Education
<b>MoHA</b>	Ministry of Home Affairs
<b>MPI</b>	Multidimensional Poverty Index
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>PLiP</b>	People Living in Poverty and Exclusion
<b>USD</b>	United States Dollar

# Glossary

**Chhaupadi:** A conservative social practice for women in certain districts of Western Nepal, which prohibits a woman from participating in normal family and community activities during menstruation, as she is considered impure.

**HRBA:** Our Human Rights-Based Approach supports people living in poverty and exclusion (PLiP) to become conscious of their rights, to organise themselves to claim their rights, and to hold stakeholders to account. ActionAid Nepal builds on international human rights law, but goes beyond a legal or technical approach, supporting people to analyse and confront power imbalances and take sides with the PLiP.

**PLiP:** We avoid talking about ‘poor people’ which has an element of condescension. ‘PLiP’ emphasises common humanity and poverty being a state that people are living in, ActionAid is trying to end this.

**Resilience building:** As disasters and conflicts increase humanitarian emergencies, people living in poverty and exclusion must have the resilience to withstand, recover from and transform systems that increase their vulnerability. Thus, resilience building is to support them for tackling underlying drivers of vulnerability, including gender inequalities.

**Active agency:** Active agency is capacity of group of individuals to act independently/collectively and to make their own free choices, claim their rights and make their own decision to fight for social justice and equality.

**Broad-based citizen:** Board-based citizen constitutes people who are within or out of the country but have mutual understanding and solidarity towards struggle of people living in poverty and exclusion. This group of people can play the active citizen's role to fight for social justice and equality.

**Feminist leadership:** Feminist leadership is not merely capacitating more women to play leadership roles, but to lead differently with feminist values and ideology, and to advance the agenda of feminist social transformation in a way that other forms of leadership do not and cannot. This can also enable to build feminist leadership capacity in non-feminist women and men.

**Young people:** Young people are a diverse group, and at ActionAid Nepal we refer to "the many faces of youth". Our definition of young people focuses on the multifaceted identity who are seeking the

rights and independence that adulthood should bring. ActionAid Nepal uses 15 – 40 as a guide only. We will be working with the most vulnerable young people and prioritise young women and girls across all interventions.

**Alternative building:** Alternative building is the way of generating real solution for sustainable change and development that is different from the mainstream traditional and neo-liberal approach in the development arena. Alternative building provides an innovative idea and approach with credible evidence for the socio-economic transformation and policy advocacy at all levels.

**Tenure governance:** Tenure governance refers to national system of distribution and use of land, fisheries and forest, which are the key to food security. Tenure governance is a crucial element in determining if and how people, communities and others are able to acquire rights, and associated duties, to use and control land, fisheries and forests (FAO, 2012).

# Message from the Board Chair and the Executive Director

Nepali society is currently passing through a substantial and substantive process of change in its political structures, socio-economic scenarios, and development processes; more intensive and impactful than ever before. This has far reaching implications for the works ActionAid Nepal has been doing with the poor, marginalised, and vulnerable communities to empower them for claiming their rights, create conditions for justice to them, and enable them to break out of poverty. More opportunities have emerged; so have additional challenges for creating a just society.

'Action for Social Justice', ActionAid Nepal's fifth strategy, the Strategy 2023, responds to the needs for actions emanating from the emerging changes in the national context and projects its courses of actions to address both the opportunities and challenges in the context of those needs. It also calibrates its organisational policies, priorities, and programmes in line with the Global Strategy of ActionAid International to align itself with the international movement for social justice across the globe. It is a guiding framework defining our way forward for the next five years till 2023.

The Strategy 2023 is an outcome of a rigorous process involving critical analysis of external environmental and internal organisational contexts and review of the implementation of the previous strategic plan as well as extensive consultations

within ActionAid Nepal, its partners, stakeholders, and ActionAid International. It has incorporated concerns, suggestions, and aspirations from all the stakeholders in crafting strategic direction of ActionAid Nepal for the next five years. As the Nepali society is in a flux of major changes, and the global context of actions for peoples' rights, justice, and prosperity is also fast evolving, the Strategy 2023 acknowledges the need for taking a flexible approach to moving ahead, adjusting and adapting to the needs as they emerge while unswervingly focusing on the mission of rights, justice, and prosperity of those who need them the most.

Strategy 2023 builds on the programme impact framework of 4 Rs (Rights, Representation, Redistribution and Resilience) with priorities on women's rights and quality education, resilience against disasters and promotion of agroecology; Climate Resilient Sustainable Livelihood and sustainable livelihood alternatives; and just and democratic governance.

We would like to thank all the community members, partners, alliances, networks, ActionAid Nepal staff, and ActionAid International officials for their untiring support and enriching contributions throughout the process of preparing 'Action for Social Justice'.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Subas KC'.

**Prof. Subas KC**  
Board Chair



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sujeeta Mathema'.

**Sujeeta Mathema**  
Executive Director

# Introduction

Action for Social Justice (2018-2023) is ActionAid Nepal's (AAN) expression of its commitment, ambition and priorities as well as invitation for collaboration. The strategy described in this paper is based on internal as well as external independent reviews, recommendations and feedbacks, and actionable learning generated thereof from those reviews and reflections.

We will continue to remain innovative in our programme impact framework, and strategic programme priorities in fighting poverty, injustice and inequality, keeping women, children, young people and people living in poverty and exclusion as its primary stakeholders while also engaging with broad-based citizens and communities at all levels for sustainable change. ActionAid Nepal's strategy also commits collective actions with agencies of women, young people, feminist leaders and social justice movements within the broader framework of Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) to development.

ActionAid Nepal's strategies and priorities also reflect its commitment to remain a part of regional and global social justice movement, and thus are informed by the strategies and priorities of ActionAid International.

This strategy describes our core organisational fundamentals or foundations and sets out overarching directions and priorities to guide strategic implementation plan, as well as annual operational plans.

ActionAid Nepal considers this strategy as a living document whereby the strategies and priorities articulated will be responsive, innovative and adaptive to changes in the external context based on continual generation of learning and capacity in the organisation, keeping the core values, vision, mission and politics of the organisation intact and strong. In that spirit, this strategy will be referred to and adapted or updated, as necessary, at the time of annual operational plan preparation, but a more formal review will be conducted mid-term.

The strategy and priorities articulated in this paper recognise and reflect two significant contextual changes:

- 1. EXTERNAL:** Operationalisation of federal governance of Nepal through newly elected local, provincial and federal political structures;
- 2. INTERNAL:** Establishment of ActionAid Nepal as a locally governed, transparent and accountable organisation

# Our Core

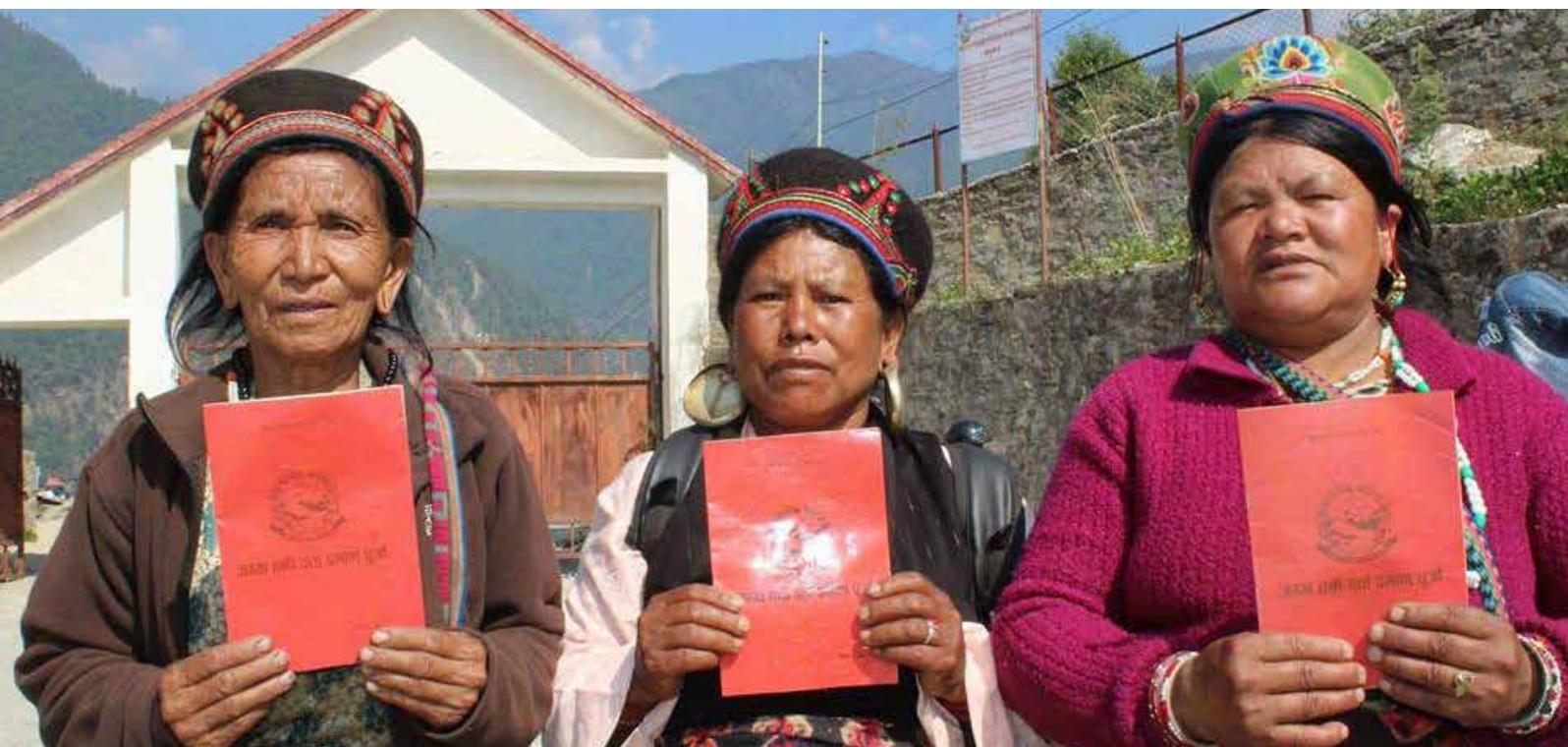
ActionAid Nepal is a non-governmental, non-denominational and non-partisan national social justice organisation rooted and working locally in different parts and regions of Nepal. We are a member of ActionAid International federation. We are also part of both national and global social justice movement and, other civil society networks, alliances and coalitions.

Shaped and driven by our values, vision and mission, we work for transformative and structural social changes through people's active agencies. We believe in human rights and embrace HRBA to fight against not only the symptoms but also the structural causes of poverty, injustice and inequality.

Discriminated, excluded and exploited people – particularly women and girls – living in poverty and injustice, whose rights are denied or violated, are our primary stakeholders. We take sides with them and stand by them; it is their stories, energy and activism that inspire us and our work.

As a part of a larger civil society and social justice movement, we engage and actively collaborate with other civil society organisations committed to equality, social justice and poverty eradication. In view of the dominant context of patriarchal system in the society, we embrace feminist principles and approaches to all our works.

*A step towards equality -  
Women with their joint land  
ownership certificates*



### Our Vision

Our vision is a just and equitable society in Nepal and beyond, where every person enjoys the right to a life of dignity and freedom from poverty and inequality.

### Our Mission

Our mission is to achieve social justice, gender equality and poverty eradication by working with people living in poverty and exclusion and their communities, organisations and movements.

### Our Values

- **Mutual Respect**, requiring us to recognise the innate worth of all people and the value of diversity
- **Equity and Justice**, requiring us to ensure the realisation of our vision for everyone, irrespective of gender, sexual orientation and gender identity, race, ethnicity, caste, class, age, HIV status, disability, location and religion
- **Integrity**, requiring us to be honest, transparent and accountable at all levels for the effectiveness of our actions and our use of resources and open in our judgements and communications with others
- **Solidarity with people living in poverty and exclusion** will be the only bias in our commitment to the fight against poverty, injustice and gender inequality
- **Courage of Conviction**, requiring us to be creative and radical, bold and innovative – without fear of failure – in pursuit of making the greatest possible impact on the causes of poverty, injustice and gender inequality
- **Independence** from any religious or party-political affiliation
- **Humility**, recognising that we are part of a wider alliance against poverty and injustice

# Our Understanding of Poverty

ActionAid Nepal's understanding of poverty goes beyond explaining the basis of subjective well-being or the availability of means to good life or inadequate income. It defines poverty in terms of deprivation in the capability of people due to lack of freedom or denial or violation of rights to live a good life of dignity that they have reasons to value.

We also consider poverty as injustice, caused by systemic and structural discrimination, marginalisation, exclusion, exploitation and oppression of people and communities on the basis of gender, age, class, caste, ethnicity, faith and geopolitical locations of the people. These structural and systemic processes also cause perpetual inequality and unequal (social, political or economic) power relationship between people, communities and regions within a country or even between countries.

The human rights framework holds state, including all its organs and structures, as the primary duty bearer in protecting, promoting and fulfilling human rights of its people. Undemocratic governance,

unjust public policy or oppressive/exploitative practices cause people to live in perpetual poverty and injustice when larger base of citizens and civil society remain complacent without contesting, protesting or demanding rights and justice.

Natural disasters cause disproportionately huge suffering and depletion in capability of excluded people and people living in poverty – not because nature treats these people differently but because unjust system pushes them to the edge of vulnerability: economically, politically or geographically.

Our strategy and priorities particularly focus on fighting the **patriarchal system** that oppresses women, **neo-liberal economic system** that privatises and expropriates public goods, public commons and public services away from people living in poverty and exclusion and their communities, and **caste system** that oppresses Dalits.

## We Work With

We commit to working with women and girls, children, landless and smallholder farmers, Dalits, socio-economically marginalised people, and their active agencies. While we work with these groups, we keep women and girls at the centre of our commitments. We value the collective agencies of these groups and strategically engage and collaborate with feminist leaders, social justice movements, networks and alliances, organic intellectuals and civil society organisations.

The young people are the driving force and energy to bring the changes in our community. Therefore, we will work with young people while keeping women and girls at the centre among the people living in poverty and exclusion.

We will constructively engage with government at all levels – local, provincial and federal – to bring the transformative changes and establish a just society.

*Young people - the driving force and energy to bring changes in our communities*



# Our Programme Impact Framework

To achieve our overall mission of social justice, equality and eradication of poverty, our work must result in real and sustainable change in favour of the people living in poverty and exclusion in the following four systemic aspects:

## **Rights**

Our work must ensure that state, corporations and society respect, protect and fulfil the rights of people living in poverty and exclusion, and vulnerable and discriminated communities. They will realise and enjoy their rights with dignity.

In another fold, the civic sense should be high where citizens fulfil their responsibilities as active citizens.

## **Representation**

In line with the dictum of “nothing about us without us”, people living in poverty and exclusion must have their meaningful and systematic representation and participation in the institutions, structures and processes at all levels - from local to national - to influence decisions about policies and practices affecting their rights, lives and livelihoods in any way.

## **Redistribution**

Our work must result in people living in poverty and exclusion having better and more access to and ownership of resources – opportunities of all kinds from connectivity, information, knowledge, productive assets, public services as well as protection of existing resources, including public commons such as water, forest, parks and public land from exploitation. In addition to access to public commons, assets and resources, redistribution also comprises sharing of care work and financial resource that contribute more towards increasing equality.

## **Resilience**

Our work must ensure that people living in poverty and exclusion must have the capacity and resources of all kinds necessary to withstand, recover and transform systems – whether natural or political or economic – that increase their vulnerability to crises and disasters which always disproportionately affect people living in poverty and exclusion.

# Our Theory of Change

Guided by our values and vision, we articulate our overarching theory of change or our approach to and method of bringing about transformational changes addressing unjust power relations towards achieving our mission as following:

## **Addressing discrimination and exclusion**

We understand that we can defeat the structural causes of poverty and injustice sustainably by systemically addressing and overcoming discrimination and exclusion based on gender, class, caste, ethnicity, age, geopolitical locations and their various combinations of intersections.

## **Active agency, empowerment and movement building**

We can achieve transformative and sustainable change in the society only through an active political and economic agency, and empowerment and movement of people who are discriminated, excluded and exploited. Only when they are organised and united to demand, claim and enjoy their rights, they are able to own and run their own productive enterprise.

Given the dominant and pervasive patriarchal system we have, transformative change for eradication of poverty and achievement of social justice and equality is not possible without gender equality. Therefore, addressing the structural causes of gender inequality, and gender-based violence through strengthening women's agencies and feminist leaders/leadership will be the key to our theory of change.

*Women keeping  
minute in community  
ReFLECT Circle*





*Street drama to sensitise community on socio-cultural issues*

### **Engagement, solidarity and support**

While ensuring primacy of the voice, actions, demands and claims of the people living in poverty and exclusion, the process of leveraging transformative change requires engagement and mobilisation of support and solidarity of broader bases of citizens in their varied capacities as voters, consumers, investors, labourers or educators at all levels – from local to regional to national to global.

### **Democratisation and just governance**

Bringing about transformative change and sustaining the process for social justice and equality require a healthy democratic space for citizens' active participation – whether it is for collaboration, advocacy or dissent. The process of bringing about transformative change should also protect and expand the democratic space for citizens' participation and open society. Our actions and engagement with government facilitate strengthening of accountability towards women and people living in poverty and exclusion to ensure quality public services and development programmes.

### **Ecological sustainability**

Inter-generational ecological justice is achieved through not only by guarding against exploitation, destruction and expropriation of nature, natural resources and public commons but also by nurturing, conserving and developing them for sustainable lives, livelihood and resilience of the people and communities for the generations to come.

### **Advocacy and campaign**

Resisting adverse policies and practices and ensuring supportive policies and practices, not only of the state but also of companies and corporations through constructive engagement where possible, together with the larger civil society, on a continuous basis, will be integral to ActionAid Nepal's theory of change.

### **Alternative building**

Developing and popularising community-led pro-poor and gender-responsive development initiatives are important for our work. Sharing of community-generated knowledge and alternatives to government at all levels, policy makers and purposeful individuals and organisations can transform public policy and development priority.

# Contextual Understanding

Our strategy and priorities are informed by our understanding, estimate or assumption of the key current external context as well as emerging trends and trajectories and response to the challenges and opportunities presented by them:

## **New and devolved federal politics**

The year 2017 ushered in new federal politics with full set of federal, provincial and local elected structures for the first time since Nepal was declared a republic. This is highly significant not only because local and provincial political institutions have been vested with power but also because the first local elections in two decades presented us with a new pool of political leaders. Despite the challenges of the new federal structures, politics and governance, it still presents us with just as much opportunities.

## **Economic growth remains steady enough**

Nepal's economy has steadily grown over the years. It grew by 6.9 percent in FY 2016/17 following two challenging years after the earthquake. However, the severe flood affecting more than one-third of the country is likely to lower the growth rate to 4.7 percent in FY 2017/18 (Asian Development Outlook 2017).

The economy of the country largely depends on its agriculture sector. On average, agriculture contributed 31.7 percent to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and directly employed 65 percent of the labour force in FY 2015/16. The GDP was also heavily dependent on remittances (29.6 percent) of foreign workers for FY 2015/16, making Nepal the second among the countries receiving the highest ratio of remittance to GDP (Economic Survey 2016/17).

Annual revenue growth has been robust, with government exceeding the revenue target. Public spending was also significantly in the upward trend in real terms, with capital spending reaching a record high of almost 8 percent of the GDP in FY 2016/17. Fiscal deficit reached 3.3 percent of the GDP in FY 2016/17. With increased government spending due to the transition to the new federal structure and earthquake and flood-related expenditures, the fiscal deficit is expected to increase in FY 2017/18 to 4.3 percent of GDP. Financing is not expected to become a problem given ample fiscal space with a low debt-to-GDP ratio and a large cash balance at hand.

The Government of Nepal has targeted to graduate from the league of Least Developed Countries to a developing country by 2022. However, the World Bank projects the likelihood of Nepal becoming a lower middle-income country is only in 2030.

### Progress towards poverty reduction

Nepal Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) Report 2018 shows that 28.6 percent of Nepal's population is multidimensionally poor. The indicators that contribute most to multidimensional poverty in Nepal are under-nutrition and households that lack any member who has completed five years of schooling. A unique feature is that the Nepal MPI can be disaggregated by the newly formed seven provinces of Nepal. Naturally, the rural-urban divide is evident, with 7 percent of the urban population and 33 percent of the rural population being multidimensionally poor. We find that Provinces 2 and 6 have the highest rate of multidimensional poverty – with every second person being multidimensionally poor (50 percent) – followed by Provinces 5 and 7 (approximately 30 percent). The report mentioned that Nepal has continuously progressed in reducing multidimensional poverty. The incidence of multidimensional poverty has gone down (using harmonised datasets) from 59 percent in 2006 to 39 percent in 2011 and 29 percent in 2014.

Among 10 major MPI indicators, the incidence of those who are multidimensionally poor and lack access to adequate sanitation facilities went down from more than 50 percent to less than 20 percent. The report has pointed that major investments in health and education will be necessary to lift the poorest of the poor out of multidimensional poverty.

The World Bank projected that the poverty rate at USD 1.9 a day line was 15 percent in 2010 and is projected to be 10.8 percent by end 2017.

*Breaking the gender stereotype - women in a mason training*



### Gender (in)equality: Much progress in papers, plenty to do in reality

The Constitution of Nepal 2015 makes a big leap towards gender equality. Article 43 deals with the rights of women that includes right to lineage, right to safe maternity and reproduction, right against all forms of exploitation, and equal rights in family matters and property. And in a heartening move, *Chhaupadi* has been criminalised by the new legal code. The constitution also ensures women's political representation at all levels of government structure i.e. 40 percent at local levels and 33 percent at provincial and federal levels. Besides the political sphere, women leadership is fast growing in other fields as well – business, media, education, science, etc.

Gender-based violence occurs as a result of the normative role expectations associated with each gender, along with the unequal power relationships between genders, within the context of a specific society. Domestic violence, marital rape, dowry-related violence, child marriage, polygamy, female infanticide, witchcraft accusations, *Chhaupadi*, and trafficking of women and girls for sexual exploitation are common gender-based violence issues in Nepal. According to a report, Nepal has the third highest rate of child marriage in Asia – 37 percent of girls are married before the age of 18, and 10 percent by 15.

As per the Demographic and Health Survey 2016, the median age of first marriage is 17.9 years among women and 21.7 years among men age 25-49. Thus, women in Nepal marry about 4 years earlier than men. As per the study 'A Study on Gender-Based Violence Conducted in Selected Rural Districts of Nepal' carried out in 2012 by the Government of Nepal, amongst 900 women aged 15-59, 48 percent of women reported that they had experienced violence at some time in their lives, and 28 percent experienced violence in the past 12 months. Emotional violence (40.4 percent) was most commonly reported, followed by physical violence (26.8 percent), sexual violence (15.3 percent) and economic abuse/violence (8 percent). Social exclusion was less commonly reported, but 11 percent of women had been denied access to health services, and 8 percent had been denied access to places of worship.

*One Billion Rising -  
celebrating womanhood*



Rapid unplanned urbanisation has contributed in unsafe urban environment for women and girls. Violence against women and girls, especially in public space, is one of the major hindrances for women's empowerment, which bars them from enjoying their right to freedom, mobility and security.

Women largely are still not receiving fair and equal wage as men, and lack safety in the workplace and social protection. Due to the social and cultural practices, women are confined to the household chores and reproductive work, and their workload is barely recognised. The burden has increased largely due to labour migration, which leaves women behind with an increased unequal workload in both paid and unpaid care work.

### Mass migration keeps complacency

Young and resourceful people are migrating to foreign countries for improved economic opportunities. The rising migration trend has resulted in increased remittance inflows to the country. In FY 1996, approximately one in four Nepali households received some form of remittances. This became one in three by FY 2004 and more than one in two by FY 2010/11 with its contribution in GDP from 2 percent in FY 1999/2000 to as much as 29.6 percent in FY 2015/16.

Large-scale migration is not a sign of strength, but a symptom of deep, chronic problem. Remittances are providing a safety net, so people do not fall into poverty trap, but they are not being used to leverage

rapid growth and greater opportunity. It is not just about economic growth; it is also about social implications which are very high. The migrants face severe modern-day slavery and sexual exploitation whilst their counterparts back home face increased burden of work.

### Agriculture is still the mainstay

Agriculture is still the major sector of Nepal's economy, contributing 33 percent to the GDP and providing employment to 65 percent of the total population (Economic Survey: 2016/17). Despite a sizable portion of population engaged in the agriculture sector, the production is insufficient to

*Farmers learning to prepare vegetable nursery.*



meet the food demand. This is mainly due to poor infrastructure, inadequate access to quality inputs, lack of agriculture finance, improper implementation of national policies and uncertain markets.

Improper land distribution is one of the major concerns of Nepal's agriculture sector. Around 80 percent of the farmers hold 20 percent of the cultivable land while the remaining 20 percent hold 80 percent. Likewise, agricultural programmes and policies are also biased towards large holder farmers, favouring businesses and markets. It has led to exclusion of smallholder farmers from their access to supports and services, resulting in increased land abandonment and food insecurity. Local and improved seeds are being replaced by hybrid seeds that are deteriorating sustainable farming practices, agro-ecological systems and resilience of farmers.

The constitution under its directive principles commits land pooling, discouraging absentee land ownership and enforcing land use policies to increase farmers' access to agricultural inputs and markets and help them attain fair price of their produce. The Agriculture Development Strategy 2015-2025 also aims to bridge gaps in the agriculture sector. It is essential that people's agencies constructively engage with the government to realise these commitments and address the gaps.

### Education a major concern

Nepal has made some progress in improving access to education in recent years but there are still several

barriers that we need to overcome. Poor retention, poor quality of education and lack of political will to implement educational policies have resulted in deterioration of the education sector.

As per the Population Census 2011, Nepal's literacy rate is 65.94 percent (male literacy rate: 75.1 percent; female literacy rate: 57.4 percent). The net enrolment rate in primary education (grade 1-5) for girls is 96.0 percent and for boys it is 97.3 percent. This reduces significantly when they attain secondary level of education, which is 19.0 percent and 17.3 percent for girls and boys respectively (MoE – Education in Figure: 2016 at a Glance). The proportion of education budget is decreasing each year and it reached its lowest at 9.95 percent in FY 2017/18.

There is a hope that the government will make more investments in the education sector as



*The power of literacy - even old age doesn't bar from learning*

*An earthquake survivor awaiting completion of her temporary house*



the constitution acknowledges education as a fundamental right. Also, the rights and responsibilities have been devolved to the local governments for them to effectively govern school education and deliver according to the spirit of the constitution.

The Education Act accredits early child education till Grade 8 as basic education. It also provisions for Inclusive Education to protect the right to education of differently-abled people and socio-economically and geographically marginalised people. Similarly, the Government of Nepal has endorsed School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) 2016-2023 to ensure quality of education and improve school governance.

### **A disaster-prone country**

Nepal's geo-physical condition and high degrees of exposure and vulnerability have made Nepal very

prone to natural disasters. The country stands 4<sup>th</sup> in climate change risks, 11<sup>th</sup> in earthquake and 30<sup>th</sup> in terms of flood risk. Nepal is exposed to about 500 events of disasters annually (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2016). Between 1971 and 2015, over 40,000 people lost their lives to disasters in Nepal. The earthquakes in 2015 resulted in loss of over 8,800 lives and destruction of over half a million houses, with economic loss estimated at USD 7 billion. The analysis of the economic values of damage and losses during 1971-2010 showed that around 2 percent of GDP is lost every year to disasters (MoHA, 2011). In addition, thousands of people have been displaced by various such disasters.

Disasters invariably hit marginalised groups, women, children and people living in poverty and exclusion the hardest, precisely because they lack the power

to negotiate access to and control over information, infrastructure, basic services and financial resources to be able to mitigate the risk they face. The ability of those living in poverty and exclusion to recover and rebuild their lives following disasters is compromised. By building the resilience of communities in a comprehensive manner, the cycle of poverty which sustains their vulnerability can be broken.

Disasters, many of which are exacerbated by climate change and which are increasing in frequency and intensity, significantly impede progress towards sustainable development. As a response, the Government of Nepal has promulgated various laws and policies, including Natural Calamity (Relief) Act, 1982, National Strategy on Disaster Risk Management (NSDRM) 2009 and Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) Act 2017. Moreover, the Government of Nepal intends to formulate National Disaster Risk Reduction Policy and Strategic Action Plan: 2017-2030 in line with Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

### **Geopolitically blessed or squeezed**

Situated between the two giant countries and economies, Nepal is well placed to make the best of this geopolitical advantage. However, these two large economies are also staunch competitors. Hence maintaining the right balance and making the most out of the situation is easier said than done.

Shrinking democratic space, growth of religious fundamentalism and incessant geopolitical tensions in the neighbouring countries in South Asia make Nepal prone to all those adverse politics that play particularly against already vulnerable and excluded people and communities and people living in poverty and exclusion in Nepal.

However, shared geophysical situation and resources of rivers and mountains and associated benefits and hazards, as well as open border with India and cultural and linguistic similarity, and compatibility in the South Asia region make it imperative that we keep a regional view, mindset and collaboration.

# Our Strategic Programme Priorities

We set the following strategic programme priorities based on our understanding of the contexts and the imperatives and opportunities they provide. These priorities are set at broad levels to inform our operational plans for specific interventions, as we know from our experience that it is not realistic to plan detailed or too specific interventional projects five years in advance in such fast moving and complex contexts and nature of our work. Our strategy and work will also be consistent with and in support to the Sustainable Development Goal 2030. These priorities are clear enough to provide us the direction but broad enough to allow agility and flexibility to respond swiftly to the changing context. Together with the implementation and operational plan, we will also develop indicators and metrics – both, qualitative and quantitative – to assess, report and learn from.

## 1 Priority

**Advance feminist leadership and women agency to defeat violence against women and girls and gender-based inequalities**

Deep-rooted patriarchal mindset, cultures, belief systems and traditions perpetuate gender-based inequality and violence against women and girls. These practices do not acknowledge sexual and reproductive health rights of women, restricting autonomy and self-determination over own bodies. Women are kept away from decision-making processes and their care works at home barely recognised; their representation is mere tokenism and the extent of policy gain is undermined by weak implementation.

Our work will focus on strengthening women's empowerment, improving safety and security of women and girls, and advancing women's productive roles.

### Strengthening women agencies and feminist leadership

- Engage with and enhance capacity of the newly elected women in local and regional elected bodies
- Ensure Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights to uphold bodily integrity of women
- Intensify our work in building deeper understanding and critical masses for advancing women rights for their greater participation
- Further work towards strengthening coalitions, alliances and networks of feminist organisations and movements
- Engage men and boys in developing their feminist perspectives as well as fighting for rights of women in both public and private spheres

### Strengthening safety, security, and dignity of women and girls

- Constructively engage with federal, provincial and local government to strengthen protection mechanism for ensuring safety, security and

dignity of women and girls affected by various forms of violence

- Engage with civic alliances, active agencies, feminist leaders and stakeholders to advance the culture of safety and security of women and girls
- Develop deeper ideas and strategy and implement programmes to propose, promote and demand gender responsive public services with the focus on women and girls

### Advancing women's productive roles and addressing burden of care work

- Advance model building initiatives to recognise, reduce and redistribute women's burden of care work
- Engage with local, provincial and federal governments for policy formation to address Unpaid Care Work
- Promote women's productive roles ensuring occupational health safety and equal wage for equal work

*Campaign for safety and security of women and girls at public spaces*





Students smile for the camera

# 2

## Priority

**Advance quality public education as basic rights for all children**

The constitution acknowledges education as a fundamental right. However, the education sector has received inadequate focus and resources from the government. The public education system as a basic public service has undergone crisis due to the lack of quality education. Though the average school enrolment is satisfactory, challenges remain on achieving equity in access and identifying the most marginalised groups of students.

Our work will focus on eliminating the crisis in providing quality education, ensuring child rights in school, and also ensure that the government investment on education is increased and prioritised.

### **Improving school governance to promote rights in school**

- Strengthen collaborative actions with primary stakeholders of education to promote education rights in public schools
- Ensure increased learning outcome and retention of girls and boys by improving learning environment
- Promote child participation by creating a space in education system through child clubs and agencies to act on child rights and quality education environment in schools and communities

### **Increasing tax base public financing to strengthen public education system**

- Enhance awareness on tax justice and tax base public financing in education and advocate adequate investment in education as basic public service
- Engage with local and provincial governments in policy works for improved financing, curriculum and pedagogies



*Entrepreneurship to  
enhance livelihood and  
thus the resilience*

# 3 Priority

**Promote sustainable  
economic  
alternatives for  
resilient livelihood**

Agriculture is one of the major sectors of Nepal's economy and despite being a major contributor to the nation's GDP, it is still lagging behind in achieving the anticipated growth, as it continues to depend heavily on the rain-fed farming and is subsistence in nature. This sector suffers from circular effect of migration with agricultural programmes and policies continuing to be biased towards large holder businesses, which result in exclusion of smallholder farmers. There is a need to defend the subsequent landlessness and food insecurity.

Our focus is to advance people's propositions for land rights, responsible tenure governance and agrarian and policy reforms. Our work will focus on economic empowerment of people living in poverty and exclusion by promoting sustainable agriculture practices and facilitating off-farm economic alternatives that also break the gender stereotype in work division. The sustainable agriculture practice respects and maintains the ecological integrity, thereby upholding the ecological justice for people dependent on natural resources.

## **Strengthening agro-ecological and climate resilient sustainable agriculture**

- Research to develop deeper understanding of how the structure of land ownership and agriculture enterprise has changed and develop programmes to respond the changes
- Strengthen active agency of landless and smallholder farmers to protect their land rights, food sovereignty (agrarian reform) and enhance productivity
- Strengthen capacity of communities to protect, claim and own public commons from expropriation or pollution in both rural and urban areas
- Promote agro-ecological practices, and influence public policies and resources focused on women and smallholder farmers

## **Promoting women and youth entrepreneurship**

- Promote rural agro-enterprises for landless people by imparting marketable knowledge and skills, increasing their participation in decision-making process and improving their access to finance and market
- Promote off-farm enterprises by integrating smallholder farmers, youths and women into competitive value chains for boosting resilient livelihood
- Promote gender-sensitive market system to encourage women farmers and entrepreneurs for their economic uplift

# 4 Priority

## Strengthen resilience against disasters

The country faces huge risks from climate change and natural disasters. The brunt is borne invariably by women, children and people living in poverty and exclusion. The recent earthquake and floods illustrate our weakened resilience and poor response thereafter. There is a need to build resilience of the communities in a comprehensive manner, breaking the cycle of poverty which perpetuates their vulnerability. Various researches and studies have shown that women are the first respondents during humanitarian crisis, but their capacities and contributions have always been overlooked.

Disasters have repeatedly affected schools and children, making education difficult. Specifically, these disasters reduce overall educational achievement by damaging school infrastructure, disrupting academic calendars and forcing children to drop out. Therefore, schools need appropriate disaster preparedness to reduce vulnerability and ensure children's access to safer education environment.

We will focus our works to lessen the impact of disasters and build resilience of communities and schools by strengthening local capacity and enhancing women-led humanitarian response.

### Strengthening local capacity to reduce the risk of disaster and the impact of climate change

- Enhance absorptive, adaptive and transformative capacity of disaster and climate vulnerable community against multiple hazards
- Promote environment friendly disaster prevention and mitigation measures to minimise loss and damage from shocks and hazards
- Engage with local government to mainstream Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation into the development plan and programme of government and development institutions
- Advance the agenda of ecological justice linking to grassroots movement to policy makers

### Enhancing effective humanitarian response led by women

- Strengthen women leadership in emergencies and instigate/promote women-led humanitarian responses
- Promote community leadership and inclusiveness in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction
- Promote power shifting to local actors to enhance higher level of accountability towards disaster-affected community

### Promoting safe school standards through disaster prevention and mitigation measures

- Promote and mainstream school safety measures into school development plans and connect to community-based disaster risk management initiatives
- Build capacity of stakeholders, especially students and teachers on evacuation, first-aid and crisis management caused by shocks and hazards

*Preparing for the worst  
- emergency mock drill  
at a school*



# Internal Organisation Development Priorities

Our internal organisation development is informed by learning from the reviews and reflections of the last strategy period. We will advance internal processes and mechanisms to make them relevant in the changed external context and fulfil the mission-related ambitions as articulated by the strategy.

## **Strengthening organisational development**

### **Governance leadership from National Board and increased connectedness from local to global**

Having acquired legal status as a Nepali national Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO), ActionAid Nepal will embrace dual citizenship to remain an integral part of the larger federal organisation. We aspire to become a full affiliate member of ActionAid International during this strategy period. We will continue to connect with and contribute to ActionAid federation at governance level and international coordination level and maintain bilateral and multilateral direct relationship with other ActionAid country members.

We will strengthen our governance structure – both board and general membership body – for their effective governance leadership, clear governance and management, and better board and staff communications and understanding.

### **Promote culture of diversity and harness skilled human resources**

We will invest in strengthening capacities of human resources to enrich and deepen knowledge on HRBA, feminist perspective and participatory approaches, and diversify funding base and digital platforms while promoting innovations in executions. Our human resources will receive adequate support to comprehend innovation and digital platforms that we aspire to attain. We will promote the culture of performance by supporting and nurturing our staff to ensure their accountability and achieving the desired results.

We believe in inclusion and strive to attain and maintain a fine balance of staff diversity and harmony based on gender, culture, ethnicity and geography.

### **Embrace a culture of innovation and digital transformation**

We embrace the culture of innovation and digital transformation to strengthen internal systems and processes for efficient and effective operation of the organisation. Thus, we will focus on digitalising our internal systems and mechanisms to establish strong learning and monitoring processes. We will use innovative digital platforms in our programming to organise, showcase and promote programmes, campaigns and social movements.

### **Enhancing knowledge management**

We will extensively promote knowledge generation and dissemination for enriching shared learning practices as an organisational culture. Theme-based and issue-based documents will be developed and published as per our work experience that will update the knowledge base of the stakeholders, ourselves and partners. The organisational information will be managed in a systematic and scientific way for easy accessibility and dissemination. Different discussion platforms will be created for staff to have critical reflections over the learning generated and practiced.

A new comprehensive robust Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) framework as per the identified programme and organisational priorities will be in place to help assess the priorities regularly. We will strengthen our online database system for efficient and effective information management verified through the system of MEL. Holistic Audit will be prioritised within the organisation to provide us

with the space to analyse our overall programme and partnership efficiency and effectiveness and to identify the areas of improvement. The strengthened MEL system will bring accuracy on the data feed and internal control system, leading to efficiency in progress monitoring and impact evaluation.

### **Diversifying funding base**

We will diversify the funding base to raise funds which are in line with our strategic priorities. We will focus on long-term programmatic funding with a broad range of institutional donors to achieve our development vision. We will maintain and strengthen Child Sponsorship funding, continually adapting our approach to the transformative change. Private sector investment in development agenda is increasing, hence we will continue to explore funding with such organisations that match our values.

### **International Child Sponsorship / Unrestricted funding**

Child Sponsorship funding will be the primary funding source to achieve the targets set in the programme priorities of this strategy. We will strengthen the Child Sponsorship funding base by promoting and applying innovative approaches in coordination with ActionAid International and Funding Affiliates to make Child Sponsorship a cost-effective and sustainable resource generation product. We will strive for the best possible innovative services to our supporters across the countries in the federation to maintain and strengthen Child Sponsorship. This includes technological innovation building on current products and communications which will create new platforms

for supporter engagement and create deeper links among supporters, children and communities.

### **International institutional funding / Restricted funding**

We will prioritise high value and institutional funding besides the unrestricted regular income. We will reinvigorate relationship with existing donors and create relationship with diverse new donors and explore possibility of new partnership to promote our culture, values and principles to develop healthy and sustainable donor relationship.

We will strengthen our Resource Generation systems to enable us to connect and collaborate with institutions of similar values and objectives. This strengthened system will have a team that displays resourcefulness to understand programme priorities and collaborate with the programme teams to generate propositions to advance, maintain and strengthen partnership with high value and institutional donors and develop skills to explore new markets including private institutions.

### **In-country fundraising**

We will prioritise in-country funding opportunities from bilateral and multilateral funding agencies and will put emphasis on local resource mobilisation to complement and excel the impact of external supports. In addition, we will collaborate with like-minded international non-government organisations (in-country and inter-country) for expanding the funding base.

We will establish partnership with progressive private and corporate sectors to reach consensus on development agenda. Therefore, we will focus on increasing visibility of our work within the country and emphasise on local funding opportunities.

During this strategy period we will invest to test and promote in-country individual giving for our social justice work. We consider in-country individual giving is important not only for fundraising, but also for building activists and supporter base for legitimacy and social change.

We will also seek government funding for our priority work within our strategic priorities, but in doing so, we will carefully avoid being coopted to lose our independence and influencing ability and avoid competition with local NGOs.

### **Value for money**

We will strive for quality and we look forward to value for money at all levels: organisation, partnerships and programmes. We will take effective measures to cut unnecessary costs and strengthen accountability towards people living in poverty and exclusion, marginalised communities, supporters, donors and other stakeholders. We will not accept fraudulent act and will follow zero tolerance towards it.

### **Organisational profile building**

Communication plays a vital role in increased visibility for improved organisational profile and resource generation. We will continue prioritising

it – both internally and externally. A separate communication strategy will be developed guiding various means of communication in print, audio, audio/visual, social media and other online resources. The strategy will also guide to develop a communication hub with a designated human resource in place.

Communication to the nonilliterate mass and hard to reach communities will be assured through wider use of audio and audio/visual means. Apart from mass conscientisation, the materials produced will also be used to further advocacy and resource generation. Since such materials largely support in extending the identity and profile building of the organisation, they will be prioritised in each of our programme implementation.

Internalising an essence of different stakeholders' participation in our planning, programming and evaluation phases, a public engagement strategy will also be developed.

### **Partnership management**

We believe in effective partnership with organisations that hold similar values and genuinely represent or are strongly connected with people living in poverty and exclusion. We will prioritise

our partnership with organisations, institutions, networks and alliances having strong commitment to implement programmes of high quality, ensuring positive transformative changes in the society and the lives of people living in poverty and exclusion. We strongly believe in being accountable to the people living in poverty and exclusion and will ensure that partners as well are accountable.

We aspire to diversify our partnership to fulfil the specific needs of the programmes to achieve quality outcome, bring about consensus on development agenda as envisioned by us, create synergy, and strengthen and empower civil society organisations and social movements. To achieve these, we will partner with social organisations, networks and civic alliances, educational institutions, governments, people's organisations and progressive private sector at all levels – local, provincial, federal, and beyond the country.

We believe in sustainability, and we endeavour to build capacity of partners we work with to enable them to further their commitment beyond our partnership. Thus, we will engage with and support partners in developing and strengthening capacity to carry out the programmatic and financial requirements through effective governance system.

# Risk Management

To deliver this strategy, we will develop and institutionalise risk management by assessing internal and external risk at regular intervals. We will develop a comprehensive risk register bi-annually. Our national board of governance will be the custodian of the overall risk register, while the senior management team will be collectively responsible for its management.

# Conclusion

Action for Social Justice has evolved over 36 years to adapt to the changing country, regional and global context. This evolution provided us with new and robust programme impact framework and theory of change that guided this strategy in developing four strategic programme priorities to fight poverty, injustice and inequality. Together, with our partners and allies, we will overcome challenges and deliver promises to realise social justice of the people living in poverty and exclusion, and we are confident that this strategy will provide a clear and concise path of guidance on attaining it.





## ABOUT US

ActionAid is a global justice federation working to achieve social justice, gender equality and poverty eradication. ActionAid Nepal is a member of the federation, working for human rights, anti-poverty and gender equality. It is a non-governmental national social justice organisation established in 1982 and working locally in different provinces of Nepal. It is also a part of both national and global social justice movement and other civil society networks, alliances and coalitions.

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