

ActionAid Netherlands Strategy 2012 -2017

11 January 2012 version

Action for equity in Africa

Natural resources for a just and sustainable future

1. Introduction

ActionAid Netherlands is a development organisation that fights against poverty and injustice in Africa. As a member of the global ActionAid federation we strongly believe that people living in poverty can lead the fight to end poverty. Together with our partners we work side by side with the poor and excluded for a fair distribution of the benefits of Africa's natural resources. By being part of a global federation we are able to ensure that their voices are heard at local, national and international levels.

We take a human rights based approach to everything we do to bring about local, national and international change. We empower excluded groups to know and make use of their rights, we build solidarity by organizing people within and across borders to promote and defend human rights and we campaign to shift national and international policies and practices to achieve equity and sustainable development.

In the next period together we will:

- work **for long lasting solutions** to poverty and injustice, advancing alternatives together with our partners and allies;
- build **deeper connections**, linking people and movements across borders and across issues, connecting our work locally, nationally and globally, and linking our programme, policy, campaigning and fundraising work;
- focus more on **changing attitudes and behaviours**, using mass communications and campaigning from a local to global level;
- **grow and engage our supporter base** to enable us to deliver on our mission objectives;
- show the **impact of our work** on the lives of people living in poverty.

In this strategy we make it clear how we believe change happens and what our role and approach will be in bringing this about. We commit ourselves to two core mission objectives and two organizational objectives on which we will hold ourselves to account. In achieving our objectives we aspire to innovate, take risks and transform challenges into opportunities for change.

2. Background

ActionAid Netherlands, formerly known as Niza (Netherlands Institute for Southern Africa), was formed in 1997 as a merger of three former anti-Apartheid movements in the Netherlands. Through the merger, The Institute for Southern Africa, The Committee of Southern Africa and the Eduardo Mondlane Foundation pooled their experience in the struggle for a free and just Africa. All three organisations had been involved in providing support to liberation movements and democratization processes in Southern Africa since 1960. In addition to a large network of partners in Southern Africa, the Netherlands and Europe, these three organisations also passed on a legacy of committed supporters. Today, almost 10,000 private individuals in the Netherlands support Niza financially and through campaign actions.

In the first decade of its existence, Niza's work was organized around programmes supporting open media and freedom of expression, human rights, peace-building and economic justice in Southern Africa. In addition, Niza was actively engaged in lobbying and advocacy initiatives in the Netherlands and in the European Union. A new strategy for 2008-2011 emphasized Niza's commitment to socio-economic justice for people in Sub-Saharan Africa in relation to the management of the continent's considerable natural resources.

In 2005 Niza and ActionAid began discussing closer co-operation. By joining forces with a strong international federation, Niza expanded its efforts in fighting poverty and injustice. Close cooperation also created opportunities for both organisations to expand their influence on the policies and positions of the Dutch government, the EU and the international development arena. It paved the way for increased engagement with the Dutch public and a stronger presence in the Dutch fundraising market.

The co-operation between Niza and ActionAid was formally established in 2007 with an Association Agreement. In 2012, the first year of this new strategy, Niza will become a full member of the ActionAid International federation. Our strategy closely links with ambitions voiced in the ActionAid

International strategy 'People's Action's to end Poverty', while maintaining our focus on Sub-Saharan Africa and natural resources. By changing our name to ActionAid we will strengthen our ability to influence and reach out to existing and new stakeholders. We will make use of the name change to boost our communications and profile ourselves in the Netherlands. We will make smart and efficient use of our resources to develop creative communications and campaigns in order to mobilize people behind our cause and emphasize our propel our identity.

3. Who we are

ActionAid Netherlands is a Dutch development organisation principally engaged in policy influencing and campaigning to bring about more equitable and sustainable approaches to natural resources management in Sub-Saharan Africa, for the benefit of its people. To achieve this, we work closely with African, Dutch and international partners to help amplify the voices of the poor and excluded in Africa. Our specific focus will contribute to the ActionAid federation's objectives of promoting people's control over natural resources and advancing their political influence to hold governments and corporates to account.

We find it unacceptable that in a continent so rich in natural resources and land so few benefit from the lucrative exploitation and trade in these commodities. The profits generated by this natural wealth generally benefits corporates and political elites, while poor communities are often left without land and/or livelihoods, or with the negative environmental or social impacts of these activities. In short, the vast majority of people bear the costs but do not reap the benefits. More equitable and sustainable models are urgently needed! We feel that the Netherlands has an important role to play in making this change happen.

ActionAid Netherlands is well positioned to bring these issues to the attention of decision makers and the public at large. For more than twenty-five years we have demonstrated concrete and tangible solidarity with people in Africa. Together with partners in North and South we have been tackling issues of the violation of human rights in Sub-Saharan Africa and the unequal distribution of wealth.

Working from the Netherlands brings extra relevance to our work. Netherlands based multinationals are end users of the world's natural resources. Our ports of Rotterdam and Amsterdam are important transit harbours for many natural resources from Africa and other regions. The Dutch government often claims to be a front-runner on issues concerning the sustainable management of natural resources.

As a member of ActionAid International, an influential global federation, we are now even better positioned to mobilize support and help bring about change. We will make strategic use of our membership and share knowledge, resources and networks to advance joint objectives. We will create opportunities for Dutch citizens to share our vision of a world without poverty and injustice, to critically examine how their lives and choices affect poor and excluded people and to demonstrate solidarity with them by taking action.

Given its profile and niche in the landscape of Dutch development organisations, as well as with supporters and policymakers, in the 2012-2017 period ActionAid Netherlands will continue to focus on addressing problems associated with natural resource governance and related corporate practices in Sub-Saharan Africa. Together with the passion and energy of our Dutch supporters, we will advance credible alternatives and strive to produce lasting solutions that make this world less poor and more just.

4. Our Vision, Mission and Values

Our Vision

A world without poverty and injustice in which every person enjoys their right to a life of dignity

Our Mission

To work with poor and excluded people, particularly women, to end poverty and injustice by promoting the fair and sustainable use of natural resources in Sub-Saharan Africa

In pursuing this mission, ActionAid Netherlands places a strong emphasis on the rights and livelihoods of women. We encourage active monitoring by affected communities and promote alternative approaches to natural resource governance. Key to tackling some of the structural causes of poverty are policy influencing and campaigning activities built on good research, local knowledge and people's pressure and support to secure fair national and international policies.

Core Values

MUTUAL RESPECT, requiring us to recognise the innate worth of all people and the value of diversity;
EQUITY AND JUSTICE, requiring us to work to ensure equal opportunity to everyone, irrespective of race, age, gender, sexual orientation, HIV status, colour, class, ethnicity, disability, location and religion;

HONESTY AND TRANSPARENCY, being accountable at all levels for the effectiveness of our actions and open in our judgements and communications with others;

SOLIDARITY WITH THE POOR, POWERLESS AND EXCLUDED, will be the only bias in our commitment to the fight against poverty;

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;

INDEPENDENCE from any religious or party-political affiliation;

HUMILITY in our presence and behaviour, recognising that we are part of a wider alliance against poverty.

5. Challenges and opportunities in a changing environment

Globally

- Expanding **demands for energy and food** are putting significant pressures on natural resources – such as land, water, raw materials, clean air and biodiversity- especially in Africa, which is the source of many of the minerals and food/agricultural products. In light of resource demands and limits, the drive to further entrench corporate freedoms and corrupt practices will likely become stronger, making it more difficult to counter the current corporate governance gap. At the same time, growing consumer interest in the fairness of products offer a window of opportunity.
- In recent years the **vulnerability of the poor** to rights abuses and inadequate governance (both in terms of policies and practices) of natural resources has been well demonstrated in Africa and elsewhere, often with severe consequences for the rights and livelihoods of the poor.
- **Women** are the **hardest hit** and the impacts of natural resource-related decision-making on women often differ from those affecting men. Those impacts need to be better identified and recognised as a first step to seeing real change in women's lives.
- **Globalization**: a world in which almost everything has direct consequences for others far away – means that people are, more than ever, mutually dependent. Poverty therefore persists in many places as the result of internal circumstances such as corruption, as well as external factors such as inequities in the global trade system, tax avoidance by multinational corporations, fluctuating food and commodity prices. International trade and investment agreements also often effectively reduce the space for African governments to protect the rights of its people.
- There are also **shared interests emerging** (for example in response to climate change) from local to global and across regions that can only be advanced through recognition of the inter-related influences of different actors and interaction between them. And, however different their aims and positions may appear in certain arenas, governments and international actors, companies and civil society organisations cannot be successful if they do not seek to engage meaningfully with one another.
- The rapid pace of **technological development** will accelerate further and often deepen divides between the 'haves' and 'have-nots'. At the same time it will create significant opportunities to democratise access to information and for people to influence government and corporate processes. Online communities and social networking will continue to change the nature of activism, organising and campaigning. People powered movements will find new ways to connect and grow, making their voices heard and contributing to more democratic and sustainable approaches to human development.

The Netherlands and Europe

- Europe is a **major consumer and also a major importer of raw materials** from developing/transitional countries, and hosts a number of large mining and other corporations involved in natural resource exploitation in Africa and elsewhere. The EU is also engaged in important relevant policy discussions with Africa on this theme, for example through initiatives like the EU-Africa Cooperation on Raw Materials.
- In international forums the Dutch government is often a **front-runner** on issues concerning the sustainable management of natural resources (for example, the Cramer criteria for sustainability concerning biofuel production, the Dutch position on climate change and adaptation funding during COP15). At the same time, the harbours of Rotterdam and Amsterdam are important transit harbours for natural resources like coal, jatropha, soy, cocoa and petrol. Additionally, Dutch based multinationals such as Philips, Unilever and Shell are large end users of the world's natural resources.
- The Netherlands is recognized as a haven for **tax avoidance**, particularly for extractives companies. A number of Dutch corporations are engaged in **speculative investments** in land in Africa and elsewhere. At the same time, the Netherlands hosts several 'sustainable banks', financing initiatives and more progressive pension funds. This results in opportunities for engagement with corporations and government for improvements in natural resource policy and practice.
- There is a positive shift in emphasis among Dutch development cooperation donors towards **Southern civil society leading** the change agenda in their countries and regions, with support from Northern organisations, academics and corporations.
- Official development aid is under pressure in the Netherlands. The Dutch Government, driven by the economic crisis, conservative political forces and recent academic analyses, is favouring **investments in sectors such as water and agriculture** in its development cooperation work, partly based on the argument of the Netherlands' specialized expertise in these areas. Dutch corporations and other specialised organisations are also being given greater opportunities to work in developing countries. This represents a narrowing and a shift to more technical, corporate-driven engagements with poorer countries. And, while commitments to women's rights and well-being remain a particular policy priority in Dutch development cooperation circles, how this will play out in practice in the current development and economic environment is still uncertain.
- Fundraising in the Netherlands will be challenging in the next years due to the **downward trend in the economy**. The recession will impact on voluntary giving: people will be more critical which organization(s) to support. There are still substantial resources available from Dutch government and the public, however they demand that development funds are applied effectively and that organizations work highly transparently and accountably. **Supporters demand more involvement**, accelerated and deepened by the increasing role that social media play. This shapes how we campaign and fundraise.

6. How we make change happen

ActionAid Netherlands views poverty as being the result of the denial of human rights, caused by discrimination, exclusion, lack of information or access to arena where decisions are taken that impact peoples' lives and livelihoods.

We believe that an end to poverty and injustice can be achieved through the active agency of people living in poverty. However, we believe this must be accompanied by solidarity, credible rights-based alternatives, policy influencing and campaigning that address the structural causes and consequences of poverty. We also see that action must be taken across multiple levels, from the local to the international if we are to achieve lasting change.

To this end, we prioritise partnerships and alliances with those actors in Africa, the Netherlands and elsewhere that are interested in working together for change through coordinated and/or complementary interventions. Through these joint activities, we believe we can make a difference to the fulfilment of the rights of people as related to natural resources in Sub-Saharan Africa. In this way, we will help ensure more accountable governance of land and mineral resources in Sub-Saharan

Africa and take steps towards increasing the financial resources available for public services, responses to climate change and other immediate challenges.

While we have chosen to focus on Sub-Saharan Africa, Europe and the Netherlands, we recognise that experiences can be both drawn from and shared with ActionAid colleagues and other partners in other parts of the world. Wherever possible, we will also promote other types of activities that contribute to our objectives. These might include addressing related shorter-term challenges, such as improving food security or responding to the natural or man-made disasters affecting communities with which we work.

Using a human rights-based approach, we work with partners in Africa, and elsewhere, around the following three axes of engagement:

EMPOWERMENT, principally by:

- **Heightening awareness** in Africa as well as among Dutch citizens, corporations, the Dutch government and the EU, of the rights violations and the context in which unaccountable natural resource decisions and practices take place that affect poor and excluded rights holders, especially women;
- Helping to **build the capacity** of rights holders, of the civil society organisations (CSOs) working closely with them (and our own capacity) to monitor, assess and explain the impacts of natural resource exploitation on the fulfilment of people's rights and livelihoods;
- **Helping to document and promote alternative approaches** bringing tangible benefits to rights holders.

SOLIDARITY, principally by:

- Supporting the **networking and strategic action** of African rights holders, CSOs and other individuals and institutions in Africa, the Netherlands and Europe regarding natural resource issues and policies.

INFLUENCING AND CAMPAIGNING, principally by:

- **Advancing the perspectives of rights holders**, increasing their influence in policy discussions and decisions regarding natural resources and seeking common agenda's with other stakeholders wherever it can advance our objectives;
- **Promoting alternatives** in decision-making processes and policies in the Netherlands, internationally and in Africa that affect the management of Africa's natural resources so that people's access to their rights and livelihoods are secured.

In summary, ActionAid Netherlands wants to achieve its objectives by:

- 1) engaging with and supporting the work of partners with regards to research, mobilisation by the poor and excluded as well as policy change;
- 2) involving poor and excluded people and their civil society organisations and/or conveying their experiences in (inter)national agenda setting and decision-making processes;
- 3) helping to formulate improved policies or approaches to seemingly intransigent natural resource governance issues, while at the same time mobilising other relevant Northern actors;
- 4) empowering people in the Netherlands to take action with communications that promote dialogue, raise knowledge and understanding and offer ways in which people can give their time, money and voice to bring about change.

7. Strategic Objectives

In this strategy period ActionAid Netherlands will continue to both challenge and work with the Dutch government, corporations and the Dutch public with respect to the role they play in the lives of the most vulnerable in Africa.

We recognize that this will require special attention to the position of women and an intensification of work at multiple levels. To do this well will require close collaboration with colleagues in Sub-Saharan Africa who work with rights holders, at national level in their home countries or in the African regional

context. We will therefore devote significant attention to knowledge sharing and joint capacity building with colleagues in Africa.

We continue to be open to new thinking, new approaches and new ways of integrating our programmes, campaigns and fundraising to maximise the impact of our work. As a social justice organisation that is part of a progressive international network, ActionAid Netherlands feels well placed to tackle the challenges ahead.

Objective 1

Increase the influence and control of the poor, especially women, in Africa to hold governments and corporations to account on the use of and benefits from natural resources

Africa is rich in natural resources that are essential to life and are key to access food, create stable livelihoods and overall a sustainable future. However, weak governance, speculative interventions and abuse of political power, often deprive poor communities, and particularly women, of their rights and access to natural resources, resulting in reduced food security and unsustainable use of resources. Women smallholder farmers in many countries are responsible for producing food but also feeding their families and communities. Yet, they face multiple constraints in ensuring their food security. Women are often regarded as “invisible” helpers that work alongside men without appropriate right to resources or decision-making. When deprived of access to and ownership of agricultural resources and inputs, women are left without the means to sustain their livelihoods, and this perpetuates inequities in their social, economic and political position.

ActionAid Netherlands believes that governments *must protect* and companies *must respect* individuals'/communities' rights to existing and ongoing access to essential natural resources and/or otherwise demonstrably benefit from their use. An enabling framework at the international level is also needed for governments to hold companies to account and to guarantee people's access. ActionAid Netherlands will continue to work with African partner organisations as well as Northern and international actors on the impacts of mining and measures to hold governments and companies more responsible for the consequences of their actions. It will maintain its concern with advancing women's rights to access and control land and expand its work on other land issues during the strategy period.

Over the next five years we will continue to work actively with partners in East and Southern Africa and with ActionAid International in support of rights awareness and mobilization, advocacy and policy change, and exploring alternative approaches related to land and mineral extraction that respect rights and bring benefits to African communities. Closer to home, we will continue to be actively involved in initiatives such as improving transparency and sustainability in the raw materials policy of the Netherlands and we actively engage in round table consultations with government, corporate and other NGOs stakeholders to improve the standards and practices for the sourcing of natural resources that are relevant to the Dutch context.

Outcomes by 2017

1. Poor and excluded people, especially women, in at least 6 African countries will have access to, control over and be benefitting from land and other productive natural resources.
2. The Dutch government and/or EU will have adopted policy positions that help secure poor people's access to, control over and benefits from land and other natural resources based on our alternative proposals.
3. At least 3 corporations or sectors will have changed their policies or practices so that poor and excluded people, especially women, have improved opportunities to earn their livelihoods from land and other natural resources.

ActionAid Netherlands will achieve these outcomes through a number of **strategic initiatives**, including:

- helping to build a network of activists that works with ActionAid to drive change at local, national and international levels;
- ensuring active relationships with ActionAid members and Country Programmes in at least 6 African countries and with other relevant actors and initiatives (e.g. through joint research);

- undertaking innovative policy influencing and campaigning aimed at the Dutch Government and corporations to increase the influence of poor and excluded rights holders.
- Building partners' and our own capacity around monitoring and documenting of the infringement of rights and alternatives and in the area of policy influencing and corporate accountability;
- promoting sustainable and economically just alternatives, with a focus on those meeting the needs of women.

Objective 2

Change attitudes and encourage the active engagement of people in the Netherlands in favour of fair, sustainable use and management of natural resources in Africa

ActionAid Netherlands understands global poverty and inequality are caused by people. International rules and policies continue to condemn hundreds of millions of people to lasting poverty. Whether it is a question of tax, finance or corporate accountability, ActionAid Netherlands campaigns to change the balance of power in a way that better recognizes and fulfils the rights of the poor.

If we are to play a constructive role in creating equal access to the world's limited resources, we need to raise public awareness in the Netherlands of the power imbalances that keep people poor. We believe the best way to expose these imbalances is by providing well documented and compelling case studies and personal stories from the African people with whom we work. We will campaign by mobilizing people in the Netherlands to take action against poverty caused by poor natural resource management with information that raises knowledge and understanding and offers ways in which people can give their time, money and voice to bring about change.

In the period 2012-2017 ActionAid Netherlands will continue to build its influence through increased policy expertise and media exposure, as well as through joint work with other civil society groups. We understand that generating political pressure depends upon the mobilization of a broad-based movement in support of our aims, therefore we will expand our outreach to new audiences, as well as increase opportunities for existing members and supporters to be actively engaged with ActionAid Netherlands' work.

Outcomes by 2017

4. The opinions and behaviours of Dutch citizens will have shifted in favour of fair and sustainable management of natural resources in Africa, particularly where it concerns the position of women;
5. 25.000 people in the Netherlands will have been mobilized –with the support of ActionAid Netherlands- into a global citizen's movement against poverty and for economic justice.

ActionAid Netherlands will achieve these outcomes through a number of **strategic initiatives**, including:

- changing people's ideas and attitudes through a strategy of documenting and exposing harmful policies and practices and proposing alternative approaches and practices;
- develop strong communication materials that emphasize linkages between our daily life choices and decisions as consumers and relate those to issues people in Africa face;
- developing a brand as 'expert-witness' by making sure our work in local African communities links to relevant policy discussions in the Netherlands and are integrated with our public campaigns;
- we will take part in multi-country ActionAid campaigns that seek to address cross-border structural causes of poverty. We will jointly bring pressure to bear on the EU and its member states to address unfair policies or corporate practices around natural resources;
- harness the power of digital technologies, making use of new (social) and traditional media to build the sense of momentum around real people facing pressing issues and engage our stakeholders to take action;
- scale up communications connected with moments of high public interest, building visibility and credibility with our stakeholders;

- creating strong partnerships with academia, research institutes and others that can contribute to the active engagement of people.

Objective 3

Maximising our impact and influence by diversifying and increasing our income.

One of the main priorities in the 2012-2017 strategy period is to raise the profile and income of ActionAid Netherlands. We will capitalize on being a member of a powerful, international federation. Our joint communications, campaigns and programmes will appeal to existing and new supporters and broaden our portfolio for funding.

In order to achieve these goals we will be putting digital communication and public campaigning at the forefront of our work. We will create close linkages with supporters in the Netherlands and the people we work with in Africa to energize and grow our supporter base. This is of particular importance in the current economic climate in which reductions in donations are to be expected. We will engage with supporters beyond their donations, treat them like a community of friends and making them feel even more appreciated. In this strategy period we will expand our acquisition programme of new supporters to multiple channels for maximum results and greater exposure.

To diversify our sources of income we will expand our identification, cultivation and solicitation of gifts from new donors. Using relationship building strategies, we will seek to maximize income and long-term commitments from those individuals/organisations able to give at the highest levels by creating enthusiasm and appreciation for our work.

Outcomes by 2017

6. ActionAid Netherlands will have secured sustainable funding from at least 12.000 regular givers, diversified our recruitment channels and maximized our voluntary fundraising income to €1mln. per year;
7. ActionAid Netherlands will have broadened its sources of institutional funding to € 3mln per year.
8. ActionAid Netherlands will have set up a high value fundraising programme, aiming to generate €350.000 per year by 2017.

To achieve these outcomes ActionAid Netherlands will engage in a number of **strategic initiatives**, including:

- we will build on our new identity as ActionAid Netherlands and engage supporters to take action and support our work, making use of our revitalised communications and campaigns;
- creating strong project proposals and disseminating stories of change to demonstrate our strengths and results;
- further researching our market, liaising with new donors and raising our profile;
- retaining and maximizing our existing income by increasing engagement and tailored appeals and upgrade campaigns;
- diversifying and integrating various channels for raising new income;
- engaging in organisation wide lead generation and follow up;
- expanding our legacy and high-value programme.

Objective 4

Deepen the impact, efficiency and accountability of our work by improving systems and processes, and increasing our people power to deliver on the strategy.

To deliver on our mission objectives we will deepen our knowledge, systems, capacity and skills. We will pursue the capabilities needed to deliver on our programmes, campaigns and fundraising. We will strengthen our internal communications to enhance cross-functional cooperation. We will also ensure that we are able to “walk the talk” when it comes to our values and practices of social responsibility.

Outcomes by 2017

9. By 2017 we have enhanced the efficiency and effectiveness of our work through improved internal communication, optimized systems and processes that enable our day-to-day work;
10. By 2017 ActionAid Netherlands has taken steps to become a knowledge hub on corporate accountability and natural resources within ActionAid;
11. By 2017 ActionAid Netherlands has established solid Corporate Social Responsibility standards in all aspects of its work.

To achieve these outcomes ActionAid Netherlands will engage in a number of **strategic initiatives**, including:

- strengthening organisational culture by enhancing the integration of policy, campaigning, programmes, communications and fundraising activities and improving joint planning & implementation of activities;
- embedding the human rights based approach and a gender specific perspective in all aspects of our work;
- building knowledge and capacity of staff and board on natural resource issues and corporate accountability and extend skills on public outreach and campaigning;
- contributing to the design of ActionAid's new accountability framework and improving our Planning/Monitoring and Evaluation (PME) approaches in line with this framework and institutional donor requirements;
- modernizing our IT systems, updating our Quality Management System (QMS) and establishing CSR standards.

8. Our impact and accountability

We realize that we work in a complex field with many players – and that our objectives are ambitious. For these reasons open and productive relations with colleagues and partners in Africa and elsewhere will be critical to our success. In order to measure our impact we will update and deepen our approach to monitoring and evaluation. This will allow us to track the progress of our outcomes. It will also indicate how we as a member of ActionAid contribute specifically to the strategic promises of the whole ActionAid Federation.

We will ensure that all our processes create space for innovation, learning and critical reflection and reduce unnecessary bureaucracy. We also ensure that our plans are participatory and based on thorough analysis of power relations and addressing rights –particularly women's rights.

We are confident that we will deliver on this ambitious strategy. We realize it means we will have to critically look at the way we work and continue to build the capacity of our staff. We will acquire effective systems that enable us to enhance the impact of our work. Our new identity will enable us to improve reaching out to our supporters and deepen their understanding of our mission. We will create consciousness, solidarity and compassion to pursue sustainable change.