

How to use ActionAid's report: Inequality: why it matters and what can be done?

Background

ActionAid's report: 'Inequality: why it matters and what can be done?' was finalised in 2011. It brings together emerging concerns about, and responses to, inequality from country reports in Bangladesh, Vietnam, Nigeria, Kenya and Malawi. The report looks at why inequality, in all its different facets, is important and then outlines some options for addressing inequality.

The different country reports have been used at national level for influencing and advocacy. This report may be used in different spaces:

- At national level it might be used for influencing targets
- At international, national or local level it might be used for generating debates amongst allies

This two page note outlines some ideas for using the report. You may have further ideas which will maximise the report's potential. Your best course of action will be based on your analysis experience of how you can most effectively influence change. The section below is split into two; activities which aim to influence targets, and activities which aim to generate debate with allies. However, the two elements are not mutually exclusive. For example, in influencing a target you may generate some debate amongst your allies. By generating debate amongst allies, you may influence targets.

The **ActionAid: discussion paper on growth** may also be useful to use as an accompanying document in your work on inequality. The discussion paper on growth comes with its own guidelines around how it might be used effectively to generate debate and you may decide to link these discussions. The linkages between growth and inequality are outlined within the inequality report. Essentially, many policy makers have historically used growth as a way to reduce inequality and/or have viewed inequality as an inevitable and short term outcome of growth. The reality is more nuanced, and ActionAid's work highlights how pursuing a growth strategy without considering inequality will lead to both reduced growth, increased inequality and other negative consequences.

Using the report for generating debate with allies

1. You could hold a **seminar or meeting** with civil society partners. This could be attached to an existing event or could be part of a coalition building exercise. You could circulate the document and some key questions in advance of the meeting so that participants have a chance to think through. You could ask two or more participants to develop a formal response to the report. In the meeting itself you could present the report, allow time for formal responses and then chair a question and answer session. If you wanted to bring together a civil society position, you could finish the meeting by looking at, and allocating responsibility for, the next steps. Next steps might be that: further work needs to be done to develop the position - perhaps bringing in more local experience and knowledge, or that further work needs to be done to find out what lobby opportunities there are. Remember to invite a broad range of interest groups to your meeting. Involve youth movements, women's movements and feminist organisations.
2. You could organise a **radio show or opinion poll**. Using and further developing the indicative two page country annexes to the inequality report, you could set up a quiz and invite people on the show to respond to questions around different inequalities within the country. For

example, 'How much more would the Kenyan prime minister, if he had taken his pay rise in July 2010 earned more than the GDP per person PPP of a Kenyan citizen?' (See: <http://www.economist.com/node/16525240> for the answer). You could use the variety of responses as a prompt to discuss the ActionAid report.

3. Using and the further developing the indicative two page country annexes to the report, you could **work with youth networks, schools or community groups** to generate debate around inequalities. There are different creative ways that you might achieve this. For example, you could do the 'grandmother's footsteps exercise' (below) to visually demonstrate the impact of different inequalities. You could also use the quiz format above. This would encourage debates around inequality and injustice amongst different constituencies.
4. You might gather **stories** of different people's experiences of inequality. Stories, quotations and videos are useful to use to influence and to share with others. The international communications team have set up some helpful guides how to effectively work with the media. For example, on how and why video is useful for influencing, what makes a good photo, and how to set up a useful media pack. Click [here](#) for the link to these documents.

Using the report to influencing targets

1. You could **organise meetings** with government officials or other targets involved with work around inequality. You could arrange new meetings for the sole purpose of looking at targets will address issues of inequality. Alternatively you could take the report to existing meetings and use the discussion around inequality to give an alternative angle to your work. Meetings could be various, for example, targets / potential allies involved with taxation, with basic services, social protection and labour and with women's rights.
2. You could try and generate **media attention** around inequality linked to an existing event or report that may emerge within your country in the coming months. This might be something you agree with and want to join, or a position that you disagree with and where you feel discussion around inequality will add weight to your decision. For example, if your government decides to reduce social protection for poor and vulnerable people, you could use the inequality reports to generate discussion around why this would be an unwise move.
3. If you have been generating discussions around inequality and have **case studies, stories and grassroots voices or videos**, then you can bring these to influence policy makers.
4. You can use the data to inform your own comments on different government policies. For example, ActionAid Kenya may use the document to comment on Vision 2030.

Grandmother's Footsteps Exercise:

This role play and game needs space. It is intended to personalise the different experiences of men and women and how their material condition or position in society results in either their access to and control over resources or exclusion. It can be used for all forms of inequality. The facilitator need only change the role cards.

Step 1 – number of roles and role selection should be guided by the rights and inequality issues of concern. Give all or some (minimum 6) participants a piece of paper with one of the following characters (for example):

- **Widow**, with 5 children of school going age, unemployed, part of a women's club, renting a house in an urban area;
- **Widow**, with four children, farming a small plot that owns in a rural area;
- **Young man**, unemployed living in rural area
- **Young women**, unemployed, living in rural area
- **Young woman**, single, well educated, works for INGO lives in a city
- **Married woman**, husband works for government, 4 children, no secondary education
- **Married woman**, self-employed, 4 children, husband works, but drinks a lot

Step 2 – inform them that they have to think and make decisions according to their character

Step 3 – everyone should stand in a straight line facing the facilitator. They should be 15-20 steps away from you.

Step 4 – ask participants to move one step forward if they are able to do any of the following and one step back if they are not able:

- I own my house or I can afford to pay rent for a house that has enough rooms for each family member;
- I can afford to send my children to a private school or good government school that has enough teachers and resources
- I am educated enough to get employment that remunerates me well
- I own land and can make decisions about how it is used
- I have a medical aid that allows me access to the best doctors and all my medical needs
- I can easily take up a leadership position in my community in public office
- I can make decisions without consulting my partner (wife or husband)
- I use my money as I wish
- I am free to associate (friendships) with whoever I want
- I am free to move around without any restrictions about where I go and what time I come back
- I feel safe to travel on public transport

Step 5: Use the visual outcome and the discussion from the above game to make draw conclusions. For example, participants will notice that poverty and inequality are about condition and position – disparities in society are based on circumstances. Poverty is not only about material want or not having practical needs, it is also very much about someone's position in society and the exclusion and inequality they experience because of that. In addition, participants will notice that the most poor and unequal suffer multiple inequalities - of gender, race, ethnicity, geography etc. In any context of similar circumstances, women are most unequal.

Ask different people how they feel. You will notice that those who take steps back feel increasingly demoralised. Those who take steps forward often do not notice those who are taking steps back.