

# ActionAid International ANNUAL REPORT 2019



Shifting Power to achieve Global Justice  
**act:onaid**

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## MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR AND SECRETARY GENERAL

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It is with great delight that we welcome you to the 2019 Federation Annual Report - a highlight of inspiring stories from our work across the world, organized around the theme of 'shifting power to achieve global justice'.

Like in previous years, the progress we have registered in a very difficult operating context in which we have seen a further deepening of the climate crisis, continued rise and manifestation of ultra-nationalism around the world and weakening of global leadership and solidarity for human rights and democracy, is remarkable.

The stories of triumph of women rising up and resisting gender-based violence in Kenya inspires us as much as the challenge we face of shrinking civic space in Guatemala requiring us to work with a multitude of allies to free incarcerated social justice activists and human rights defenders. From Bangladesh to Zambia, Australia to Senegal, The UK to Haiti, we see the courageous leadership of women and young people championing social and political struggles around the world. These stories give us a stronger belief that solidarity, which is the currency our Federation trades in remains critical to achieving global justice. You will find these stories of global and local work across the world encouraging, and hopefully inspiring to push us to do more.

In the second half of 2019, the Federation experienced a seamless leadership transition when our former Secretary General, Adriano Campolina moved on. We made a prompt appointment of an Interim leader in Anne Jellema who did an excellent job to keep all our Federation commitments on track. Important Federation change processes like the country models review continued unabated while we continued to make important strides in changing our internal culture by deepening our commitment to feminist leadership with more leaders and countries adopting our 10 Principles of Feminist Leadership. Internal systems projects such as the Global Finance System, the Contract Management System all made important strides forward as you will read in this report.

Our governance priorities included oversight over the next phase of the country models review after the ActionAid International Assembly approved early adopters in June 2019. We also kept a close oversight on pooled Federation fundraising investment. Following the steer and expectations set by the Assembly, we initiated and successfully completed the recruitment of our new Secretary General Julia Sanchez who we are delighted to co-author this annual message with.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank Adriano Campolina for the inspiring leadership he provided during his tenure as Secretary General. And finally, we extend our hearty appreciation to all our supporters from around the world who make the work we do possible and continue to show the great spirit of solidarity for our common humanity.



Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda (Dr.)  
**Chair, ActionAid  
International Board**



Julia Sanchez  
**Secretary General,  
ActionAid International**

# INTRODUCTION

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## SHIFTING POWER TO ACHIEVE GLOBAL JUSTICE

This Annual Report reflects the work of ActionAid International worldwide during 2019, led by countries, as well as collective work led by the Global Secretariat (GS). It presents some of the year's highlights and lessons learned as we continued to deliver on the commitments of our **Global Strategy – Action for Global Justice** – and as such acts as both an accountability and learning resource for our supporters, partners, staff, donors and networks around the world.

The theme of this report is 'shifting power to achieve global justice' – a theme that reflects a central pillar of how ActionAid believes change happens in the world: we believe that the injustice of poverty is a result of unequal power relations that exist in families, communities, countries, regions and globally. Achieving social justice and eradicating poverty therefore require challenging and transforming unequal power relations.

This means building the collective power and agency of people, especially those living in poverty and exclusion, to make visible power (usually in the form of recognised authority and positions), invisible power (often in the form of traditions) and hidden power (quite often expressed indirectly by corporates and elites) more transparent and accountable.

The stories of triumph and achievements, and those of failure and missed opportunities, contained in this report are our account of how far we came this year in shifting power to achieve social justice, poverty eradication and gender equality. We also relay progress we are making internally as we aim to become more agile, adaptive, impactful, and accountable to everyone involved in our work.

Finally, we present a summary of the financial resources generated by the organisation and how they have been used.

### HIGHLIGHTS IN THE 2019 FEDERATION ANNUAL REPORT

- With ActionAid's support, women and youth have taken on leadership roles and are driving social change.
- With our allies and partners, we continued the global pushback against the privatisation of public education and developed stringent conditions for public funding for private education provision.
- Influenced the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to advance the agroecology agenda as opposed to industrial agriculture.
- Responded to 37 emergencies across the world, reaching nearly 900,000 people in crisis.
- Strengthened alliance building for the global campaign on women's labour, leading to collective victory in the passage of the ILO Convention 190, Eliminating Violence and Harassment in the World of Work.
- Registered a 10% increase in institutional funding across the Federation and nearly 50% increase in cost recovery from projects.
- More than half of Federation members rolled out our Global Finance System.



Members of Rebuild Women's Hope, a non-profit coffee collective in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The photograph was taken as part of ActionAid's Women by Women campaign which celebrates the inspiring stories of women in the countries we work in and the female photographers who are capturing these stories from behind the lens. Photo: Pamela Tulizo/ActionAid

# A SOCIAL JUSTICE FEDERATION

## WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

ActionAid is a global Federation working to achieve social justice, gender equality and to eradicate poverty. We envision a just, equitable and sustainable world in which every person enjoys the right to a life of dignity, and freedom from poverty and all forms of oppression. To do this we mobilise, organise and work with communities living in poverty and exclusion, people's organisations, and women's movements, networks, and solidarity groups to understand, tackle and overcome the structural systemic causes of poverty and injustice. We put women and their leadership at the centre of our work to support them in asserting their rights and challenging all forms of violation.

We believe that transformative change is possible for communities — particularly for women living in poverty and exclusion. Through our human rights-based approach we help link community struggles to national and global-level advocacy and campaigning. This strengthens the hand of communities in challenging unequal power relations and bringing about a shift in the visible power of governments (through laws and systems), the invisible patriarchal power that continues to oppress and discriminate against women and girls, and the hidden power of powerful multinational corporations driven by unfettered neoliberalism. We focus our programmes on addressing the structural causes of violence against women and girls; on economic justice, civic participation and state accountability in the delivery of quality, gender-responsive public services; strengthening resilient livelihoods; and securing climate justice and transformative women-led emergency preparedness, response and prevention.



ActionAid Somaliland staff member Hibo, helps coordinate and facilitate the distribution of dignity kits to women at a camp for internally displaced people in Somaliland. Photo: Karin Schermbrucker/ActionAid

## WHERE WE WORK AND MEMBERS

ActionAid was founded in the UK in 1972 and today has 43 members across Africa, the Americas, Asia, and Europe. Headquartered in Johannesburg, South Africa, we have regional hubs in Bangkok, London, Nairobi, Rio de Janeiro, and Brussels.

The Federation has two categories of membership — associates and affiliates:

- **Associate membership** is a transitional status for organisations moving towards full Affiliate membership (see next category). It is intended that, in time, all Associates become Affiliates. Associates may be a) former ActionAid Country Programmes; b) new organisations created by ActionAid as Country Programmes that are expected to become Associates; c) existing organisations outside ActionAid that are considering joining the ActionAid Federation. There are currently eight countries with Associate membership status including: Indonesia, Nepal, Rwanda, Spain, Tanzania, Thailand, Vietnam, and Zambia.
- **Affiliation** is the full membership category. There are currently 22 Affiliates — Australia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Denmark, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, France, India, Ireland, Italy, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Sweden, The Gambia, Uganda, UK, and USA.
- **Country Programmes** are managed by the Global Secretariat and facilitate the representation, management, and coordination of the Federation's work in the countries. There are currently 13 Country Programmes: Afghanistan, Burundi, Cambodia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Haiti, Liberia, Myanmar, Palestine (Occupied Palestinian Territories), Senegal, Somaliland, South Africa, and Zimbabwe.
- **Others forms of presence across the world include:** The Arab Regional Initiative, Regional Office in Jordan, Brussels — (EU) Office. Others are Colombia and Bolivia (currently part of Alianza Spain but in transition).



# OUR STRATEGIC CONTEXT

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## WOMEN AND YOUTH LEADING CHANGE

In a world where civic space is shrinking, inequality is growing and an increasing number of far-right governments retreat from providing basic rights and services, this year we supported movements of young people and women to collectively to demand accountability from their States and leaders for protection of their rights.

In *Afghanistan*, a young people's advocacy group mobilised by ActionAid successfully advocated for provision of electricity in Dawlatabad district, coordinating the collection of data and lobbying the local electricity supplier.

In *Brazil*, a young people's movement based in informal settlements that are seen as illegal (and which suffer huge inequalities) registered hundreds of thousands of their peers to systematically collect data and produce public communications, changing perceptions about life in these settlements and strengthening efforts to claim their residents' right to the city.

Across the ActionAid Federation, the communities with whom we work continued to demand justice, protection, and delivery of public services: In *Colombia* they played a key role in mobilising to ensure that specific clauses of the 2016 Peace Agreement were not removed, while in *Guatemala* young people used art, music and theatre to successfully increase their representation in decision-making in Maya Q'eqchi' territory.

In *Palestine*, despite the high level of scrutiny of youth volunteerism generally, in the Abda and Imrish areas of Hebron young people successfully pushed to terminate a contract between a local community and a private electricity company, under which the company had failed equally share the proceeds from the electricity connection, as had been agreed. The contract was replaced by one that saw the community keep the proceeds. And in *Zambia*, this year mothers' groups and young people's movements collectively led efforts hold their governments to account in providing public services, successfully lobbying for clean water connections in local villages and schools, and improved road networks.

**The fight for labour rights and decent work remained a huge struggle across the world.** In *France*, a group of women factory workers successfully pushed for payment of employment benefits after unlawfully being fired for joining a union, while in *India*, young urban women successfully pushed for an increase in the monthly pension for single women.

And in *Nigeria*, unemployed youth came together to successfully demand the creation of a Youth Development Commission to focus on supporting and developing vocational skills among unemployed young people – the commission provided start-up kits to help the youth generate an income and become self-reliant.

And in the face of the **global climate change crisis and food insecurity**, young activists took action: In Africa, Activista and young urban women in *Ghana* joined a mega climate justice campaign dubbed Climate Hackathon through social media to petition their government on the effects of climate change.

In Greece and Vietnam, tens of thousands of students, their teachers and solidarity peers in ten other countries presented a joint Young People Manifesto on waste management towards Local Authorities on sustainability, marking a major youth-led collective action for their city's future and hosted the Plastic Free School campaign respectively. They developed joint charters with collective commitments to stop the use of products and instead promote the usage of natural and recycle products.

And in the *USA*, the Sunrise movement mobilised young people to push for a sea-change in climate policy advocacy through the Green New Deal, with policy demands at the proper scale to address the climate crisis.

Women in the communities in which ActionAid works continued to challenge invisible power in the shape of oppressive **patriarchal systems characterised by weak economic justice, multiple violation of rights and poor political representation**. Grassroots women in *Bangladesh* successfully lobbied their local governments to scale up a survivor-centred, local-women led emergency response in 10 districts to being nationwide, while in *Kenya* local women continued to fight to protect girls from female genital mutilation (FGM) and to ensure their access to education continued. These efforts saw the successful formation of the East Africa End FGM network to overcome the cross-border challenges of FGM.



In ActionAid-supported advocacy, Nigerian youth march to parliament to demand the passing of the youth commission bill by the State law makers. Photo: ActionAid

No one is too young to fight for their rights, and this year, school girls' clubs in *Mozambique* (in solidarity with girls that had dropped out-of-school) successfully demanded the removal of a repressive law that automatically transferred all pregnant girls to night classes, increasing their insecurity and vulnerability. The struggle, joined by university students and Mozambique's women's movement, resulted in the enactment of three laws (the Law Against Premature Unions, the Family Law, and the Succession/Inheritance Law) that would help protect the girls' rights. Meanwhile women activists in *Sierra Leone* fighting gender-based violence and working to combat teenage pregnancies mobilised and presented their stories to parliament, successfully leading to the review and enactment of the 2019 Sexual Offences Act, with strong penalties for sexual offenders.

In *Tanzania* and *Zimbabwe*, like many other countries, young people are poorly represented in political decision making, ActionAid mobilised for the political representation of young people and saw over 100 young people elected into local government positions. Meanwhile, in the UK, the ActionAid-driven 2019 #MyBodyIsMine campaign, led by a young political activist, connected young women to call for the criminalisation of 'upskirting' and stronger penalties for perpetrators.

**Protracted refugee crises** increase the vulnerability of people living in poverty and exclusion and exacerbate the violation of rights. Young volunteers in Denmark and Italy worked with young refugees to successfully push for inclusion of their educational and employment rights, while in Italy a group of young migrants and their local peers pushed highlight migrants' and refugees' educational, housing, and social needs. This resulted in the City Hall of Naples opening its Municipal Youth Centre for use by young activists from a mix of backgrounds (university students, refugees, asylum seekers) to promote social cohesion.

# OUR COLLECTIVE ACHIEVEMENTS

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## JOINT WORK UNDER INTERNATIONAL PLATFORMS AND OUR GLOBAL CAMPAIGN

### INTERNATIONAL PLATFORM

#### **Programme priority 1: Addressing the structural causes of violence against women and girls, and securing economic justice**

This year we saw a major shift in understanding of unpaid care work (UCW), with most of the Federation contributing significantly to recognition of this issue, and actively contributing to influencing national policies in some countries.

**Influencing the grassroots:** In *Ghana*, our national-level campaign on childcare centres as part of our advocacy on UCW helped inform national policy, opening a huge media conversation on the topic and our campaign demands. As a result, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection nominated ActionAid Ghana to collaborate with UNICEF to develop a reviewed national policy on Early Childhood Care and Development, incorporating provision of childcare centres.

And in *Nepal*, our work on UCW at all levels led to the establishment of government-funded Community Child Care Centres in Bardiya, and water mills in rural remote areas that significantly reduced local women's workload.

In *Rwanda*, there was tremendous change on how people view and recognise UCW, with ActionAid contributing to Rwanda's National Gender Policy specifically including aspects of UCW.

**Accountable collaboration:** ActionAid's Public Finance for Agriculture, Young Urban Women and Promoting Opportunities for Women's Economic Empowerment and Rights (POWER) projects jointly collaborated on advocacy, creating joint messages for African Union (AU) Advocacy through the Gender is my Agenda Campaign. These messages informed our contribution to the AU global gender strategy.

We worked collectively to establish alliances, connecting women and their social movements with external feminist groups, building on our strength in rootedness to share objectives and political positions. Ghana's Young Urban Women's movement expanded by recruiting people with disability, informal economy workers, young women who worked in bars, night clubs, and people of different genders. At regional and international levels, the POWER project and women farmers challenged the power of bureaucrats and technical experts by amplifying the voices of rural women farmers at the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, Africa Union, and at the Food and Agriculture Organisation.

#### **Programme priority 2: Ensuring increased civic participation and state accountability for the redistribution of resources and delivery of quality, gender responsive public services**

Our work this year mainly focused on increasing women and young people's participation in order to increase their voice to demand funding and the delivery of quality gender responsive public services.

**Learning and generating alternatives:** In 2019 we collaborated with Centre for Applied Human Rights at the University of York, and supported the development of audio visual case studies capturing ActionAid's work in support of human rights defenders (HRDs), and social movements promoting and protecting human rights in contexts of shrinking civic and democratic space. These case studies focussed on *Bangladesh, France, Guatemala, Kenya, South Africa, Spain, Uganda, Zambia* and *Zimbabwe* (see <https://ActionAid.org/stories/2019/celebrating-power-human-rights-defenders>).

**Influencing and campaigning:** This year we became a member of Feminists for a Binding Treaty – F4BT – and the Treaty Alliance. We advocated for women's rights to be placed at the forefront of the revised draft of the UN Binding Treaty, and to include safeguards for the rights of HRDs for communities affected by violations. Our engagement during the 5<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Negotiations on the Binding Treaty resulted in greater recognition for the F4BT recommendations.

**Decreasing invisible power:** ActionAid’s advocacy and support for human rights defenders in Guatemala contributed to the release of Abelino Chub Caal, a defender of the rights of indigenous people whose land is under threat from large-scale commercial landowners and agribusiness. Abelino had been held in pre-trial detention on unsubstantiated charges, for more than two years since 2017 (see <https://ActionAid.org/stories/2019/criminalisation-confronted>).

This year our work in resisting the privatisation of public services saw us play a leading role through convening human rights experts from around the world at a ‘right to education initiative’ gathering in Côte d’Ivoire to finalise and agree the Abidjan Principles – which oblige governments to support public education and regulate private provision. These guidelines and principles have since been endorsed by the Human Rights Council and major human rights treaty bodies and journals.

### **Programme priority 3: Resilient livelihoods and climate justice**

**Climate mobilisation:** This year 22 countries mobilised to act on climate justice. During the Africa Climate Week in Ghana we successfully put the spotlight on agroecology as a part of the solution to the climate crisis. ActionAid made a major contribution to the highly influential Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) special report on Land and Climate in August 2019, which endorsed the need to shift from industrial agriculture to agroecology.

Externally, we coordinated with 45 organizations and members of the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa from over 15 countries to promote agroecology at the Africa Climate Week event in Accra in March 2019. We also partnered with movements including the Asian Peoples’ Movement on Debt and Development (APMDD) and 350.org at the Asia Pacific Climate Week in September in Bangkok to demand an end to fossil fuels and the provision of adequate climate finance.

In collaboration with Alliance for Convention for Biodiversity-CBD, we advocated for a gender-responsive post 2020 Global Framework that recognizes and protects environmental human rights defenders, recognition of a sustainable agriculture model (especially agroecology), and community-based biodiversity protection. These are articulated in the draft Post 2020 framework, which will be adopted during the CBD Conference of Parties 15<sup>th</sup> annual meeting.



Global Climate change march in January 2019, Yangon, Myanmar. Photo: ActionAid

#### **Programme priority 4: Drive transformative women-led emergency preparedness, response, and prevention**

In 2019, with our local partners, we continued to implement ActionAid's Humanitarian Signature. Humanitarian responses included Cyclone Idai in South-East Africa; flooding across South Asia; drought across Southern Africa; the ongoing Syrian refugee crisis response in Jordan and Lebanon; and the cholera and Ebola outbreaks in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

ActionAid and our local partners (of which over 60% are women's organisations) responded to 27 new emergencies across Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, reaching approximately 250,000 people. Combined with our ongoing responses, we supported 37 emergencies in total, reaching over 880,000 disaster-affected people.

We played a key role in the Feminist Humanitarian Network, a global network of women leaders committed to a transformed humanitarian system that promotes a localised feminist agenda. ActionAid's International Humanitarian Action and Resilience Team — IHART — collectively supported women leaders to participate in global and regional platforms, including the World Humanitarian Action Forum, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR)'s 2019 Global Platform, ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment, and the Grand Bargain Regional Localisation conferences.

We also coordinated with the Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Reduction to align our messaging with their civil society network, and with the Huairou Commission to align with a wider network of local women's organisations.

These powerful engagements resulted in four of our advocacy messages being directly included in the UNDRR co-chair's summary which formally captures what UNDRR's strategy should take forward.



ActionAid Zimbabwe's lean season assistance programme in 2019 helped 49,000 food-insecure people in Makoni.  
Photo: Cynthia Matonhodze/ActionAid

## GLOBAL CAMPAIGN ON WOMEN'S LABOUR, DECENT WORK, AND PUBLIC SERVICES

The #AllWomenWork campaign gained momentum this year. The campaign alliance — which includes feminist organisations, trade unions and networks of informal women workers, and social justice organisations — was formally initiated. Our investment and collaboration with this alliance core group, plus our work with other strategic organisations (especially the Global Unions), the petition and other digital mobilisation activities was key to the success of the campaign's goal for the adoption of the ILO Convention on Violence and Harassment in the World of Work at the 2019 ILO Conference.

We made considerable strides through our Youth Working Group, which pushed countries to have youth focal points, engage young external allies, and support young feminist allies and movement. In addition, they generated knowledge/research and advocacy materials that were used internally and to shift power externally with a youth-specific analysis. These perspectives and global conversations have been taken to young people nationally to share insights to influence what we do at the global level.

We engaged strategically with international and regional institutions including the Commission on the Status of Women, High Level Political Forum; the United Nations General Assembly; the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of Parties; and the IMF/WB annual meetings, to speak to structural issues that unify us across the different international platforms. With the campaign alliance core group, Feminists4BindingTreaty, Global Campaign on Education, Public Services Intl, International Trade Union Confederation, Eurodad, Bretton Woods Project, Feminist Humanitarian Network, the Global Alliance for Tax Justice, the climate justice and food sovereignty movements, and the Gender and Trade Coalition, our visibility in international spaces increased and political and policy coherence was enhanced.

# FROM ACROSS THE FEDERATION

## INSPIRING STORIES FROM ACROSS THE WORLD

This section features four inspiring stories of change, and of achieving social justice, poverty eradication and gender equality in 2019. Each story demonstrates how we work with our allies to shift power, leading to qualitative change in people's lives. There are 41 other such stories from all the countries where we work, these four profiled below are a selection presented under each of the four collective priorities.

### **ActionAid Ireland and partners build food security**

In 2019, the Women's Rights programme (funded by Irish Aid) focused on deepening the behaviour change approach across Ethiopia, Kenya, and Nepal, directly linked to addressing both economic empowerment for women, as well as safety and security to reduce gender-based violence against women and girls. The teams across the three countries selected different sets of behaviours on which to focus. In Nepal, the focus was working with bus drivers and conductors to reduce sexual harassment in public vehicles. In Ethiopia, the focus was working with the Menja community (one of the most marginalised communities in Ethiopia) to access more economic opportunities, through practising better hygiene. In Kenya, the programme aimed to work with the most marginalised women in the community to increase their participation in community development initiatives. This ranged from participation in alternative livelihoods, to engaging with public forums where county budgets and planning were taking place.

In Kenya, ActionAid and partner-organisation Sauti Ya Wanawake Kishushe (a local community women's group) designed interventions to build the knowledge and skills of marginalised women on available alternative livelihoods. The interventions were delivered through better-off women sharing their life stories, training on modern farming technologies, provision of seeds, seedlings, and pest control initiatives. As a result, 42 women took up farming as a livelihood activity for the first time, and 43 other women diversified their livelihoods. Filister, a mother of 11 children who was widowed in 2011, is one of the inspirational women who took part in the programme in 2019.



Filister, a member of Sauti Ya Wanawake women's rights group in Kishushe, Kenya. Photo: ActionAid

“The programme taught me how to plant different crops such as green grams, maize, tomatoes and watermelons,” she says. As a result, Filister was one of the women who ventured into agriculture for the very first-time last year, harvesting 130 kg of green grams from her ¼ hectare parcel of land, with less than a kilo of green gram seeds as an investment.

### **Community mobilisation and national solidarity improves education access in Bogor, Indonesia**

Indonesia faces serious problems related to education infrastructure, with one in every six elementary school buildings being dilapidated. Since 2015, five children have died and 84 have been injured because of collapsed school buildings. As a result, ActionAid’s partner in Indonesia, Yappikka (YAA), runs the Safe Schools Program to empower the school community and advocate for school improvement budgets. In Bogor, located only 80 km from Jakarta, an ActionAid-supported advocacy programme this year empowered and the local community to advocate for construction of a class in a remote location where there is no public transport.

YAA, together with a local partner invited residents to form a school community consisting of parents, teachers, and local leaders. They were introduced to the concept of children’s rights to education, (especially decent infrastructure); were informed of the local education budget and how to advocate for how it should be spent; and were put in direct dialogue with the local parliament and the Education Office. Constituents met with their parliamentary representatives, while local people got the media involved.

These efforts pushed the village government to provide land for the construction of school buildings and in 2019 the school building was completed. Parents have become more concerned about their children’s education, while women’s groups took the initiative to use the school building to organise community-integrated health service posts. They will also develop literacy lessons for women who have never received an education. The Safe Schools Program contributed to an increase in the infrastructure budget allocation in Bogor District so that the number of damaged schools fell from almost 17% to 11.4%.



Ms Ela (centre) helped lead her women’s group in Bogor, Indonesia, to successfully lobby for the construction of new school buildings.  
Photo: ActionAid



Maria, who is a member of a local movement that ActionAid Brazil supported in a struggle to restore and protect their access to the palm area now gathers the nuts of the babassu tree in Maranhão - Brazil, which has been a tradition for generations of women. Photo: ActionAid

### **When local meets global: solidarity to protect livelihoods in Brazil**

“When the agribusiness and extractive companies come to our land, they take away our rivers, ponds, the Babassu palm trees, and finally take our lives away, breaking our way of living, our spirit,” said Maria do Rosário, leader of the Interstate Movement of Babassu Coconut Breaker Women (MIQCB). Maria do Rosário is a Babassu coconut breaker living in Maranhão. This huge area is threatened by the advance of agribusiness and private properties, which causes forest fires, poisons palm trees, and prohibits women’s access to palm areas. “We suffer death threats from land grabbers who claim they own the land. But we were born in this land, they weren’t. They arrived wanting to take the right to live here away from us. But we have our culture, our traditional way of living. I now live under protection as other community leaders. We don’t want to be forever under a protection programme because it means to abandon our origins, our land, to lose our autonomy. We choose to struggle for our land and for the free access to Babassu palm trees,” said Maria.

In 2019, agribusiness and land grabbers increased the pressure to have traditional and indigenous people evicted from their lands. Tensions grew. Alleged criminal fires were set in the Amazonian region and parts of Cerrado Savannah to force eviction. The federal government’s response was slow and inefficient, and in the face of increased death threats and damage to their lands, the Babassu coconut breakers’ leaders embarked on a journey to Europe together with ActionAid to call for world leaders’ attention and ask for solidarity. They visited the UK, France and Belgium, and ActionAid organised the Babassu coconut breakers’ meetings with European parliamentarians, activists, academics, and journalists.

In meetings with officials, ActionAid was able to demand that the EU impose an obligation on companies putting raw agricultural products such as soy, cocoa, sugar and meat on the EU market to ensure they were produced without deforestation. The coconut breakers’ leaders also raised awareness about the growing persecution of Brazilian traditional and indigenous peoples in the media. Meetings with activists in the UK and France facilitated by ActionAid helped to engage with other civil society organizations to build a solidarity agenda. Back in Brazil, ActionAid and the MIQCB launched the campaign “Daughters of Mother Babassu Palm” to give visibility to the importance of supporting the coconut breakers in the fight to preserve Babassu forests.



Eve Tekeza in her new home. ActionAid Zimbabwe constructed the wooden house as part of the Cyclone Idai reconstruction work.  
Photo: ActionAid

### **Restoring the dignity of women during Cyclone Idai in Zimbabwe**

In March 2019, Zimbabwe was hit by the devastating Cyclone Idai, which left a trail of destruction, death, and displacement for thousands of people. Cyclone Idai was one of the worst natural disasters in recent years to hit Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Malawi. In Zimbabwe, the displacement saw some women living in open spaces, with relatives, or in tents provided by well-wishers. Gender based violence (GBV) increased, linked to high levels of poverty caused by Cyclone Idai's impact on people's livelihoods. The introduction of food relief programmes made women more vulnerable, with reports of "food for sex" emerging.

As part of the Cyclone Idai Early Recovery Response, ActionAid Zimbabwe (AAZ), in partnership with partner-organisation Jekesa Pfungwa Vulinqondo, facilitated the construction of semi-permanent lockable wooden houses for women-headed households, lockable toilets, and five safe houses to ensure the safety and protection of women in Chimanimani and Chipinge communities. These were used by about 500 women. Learnmore Ndarera (40), a leader of a safe space in Chimanimani said: "The safe house has been a place for the women to feel secure in their neighbourhood and learn new livelihood skills ... after most of the community members' livelihoods and banana farms were destroyed by Cyclone Idai."

The focus on women's protection also included the creation of safe spaces for women and girls where information on sexual and gender-based violence could be provided, alongside referrals and legal support for women survivors. Women leaders were trained to monitor and assist survivors of gender-based violence to ensure their protection. Fifteen women from Chimanimani and Chipinge attended AAZ-facilitated Women-Led Community-Based Protection Trainings. These women are leading the Cyclone Idai Response at community level where they facilitated the setting up of the safe spaces and reached out to 1,899 women.

The AAZ Early Recovery Programme reached over 5,000 people in various interventions. These include women's leadership through community-based training, psychosocial support, livelihood programmes such as seed distribution for planting and support with learning materials for school children and construction and rehabilitation of toilets in affected community schools. This emphasized ActionAid's humanitarian signature of promoting women leadership, protection and accountability during emergencies, focusing on the full participation of women in all processes.

# A LEARNING ORGANISATION

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## LESSONS FROM OUR SUCCESSES, FAILURES AND MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

In 2019, we looked at learning differently, mainly by reflecting on missed opportunities, the lessons we learned from these and how they would inform future work and approaches. One of the key lessons is that there is increasing need for us to align our work and external messaging and communicate better. We need to strengthen our profile and distinctiveness.

A clear and powerful way to achieve this is to emphasise the strength of our local engagement and rootedness in communities. We need to invest more in highlighting this organic connection to communities and women-led initiatives which provide evidence from lived experiences for broader advocacy and campaigning with allies and stakeholders.

In challenging visible, invisible, and hidden power we are learning that investment on a larger scale is required to build and empower local people's capacity to drive change. The models and alternatives they build can go a long way in influencing policy advocacy at national and international level.

However, in many countries, return on investment in policy advocacy in shrinking political space is falling. This calls for more solidarity efforts and better collaboration among civil society, whose approaches and positions can differ. This is costly but worth investing in, because while it may take time to bring divergent views together, it can yield better results due to the mass mobilisation and harnessing of the strengths of each organisation.

To challenge the "hidden power" of multinational corporations, advocacy for enactment of laws is not enough, as we learned in France through a report with five other French NGOs that reveals non-compliance by many companies and the lack of plans by government to implement a law on the due diligence of transnational corporations two years after its enactment. We therefore must continue to be part of the wider NGO coalition to push for a UN treaty to regulate multinationals and to challenge the institutions/systems responsible for rights violations.

ActionAid, while improving its digital capacity, is still way of the mark and so another missed opportunity was on our engagement with young people who are mostly digital savvy. We need to invest in learning from young people in terms of strengthening technology integration in providing better mobilisation opportunities, empowerment and connecting people. This year in particular was one in which the Federation explored the use of digital action and connection, and learned more about digital activism from young people-led social justice struggles.

As the global context changes, funding architecture changes with it, and a range of crises continue to shift the interests and focus of donors. Countries of all income levels therefore must work together and explore better coordination for lobbying and influencing institutional funding. For example, the refugee crisis in the north caused a shift in interest and focus from foundations, making it difficult to ensure sustained funding for other programmes. As a Federation our constant review of the implications of these global changes for our programmes must include thorough funding and risks analysis to ensure timely and adequate decisions for sustained work.

# THE WORLD IS CHANGING AND SO ARE WE

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## HOW THE FEDERATION IS CHANGING INTERNALLY

ActionAid's four organisational change areas represent strategic shifts that will help us to deliver the global strategy, Action for Global Justice 2028.

**Strategic Shift 1:** A more agile, unified, and networked Federation

**The Country Models Review process rolls into its third phase:** Following a successful foundational stage of defining change priorities and expected results of this long-term organisational transformation process, 2019 saw all the countries of the Federation undertake a self-assessment, committing to transform to one of the four models of presence approved by the General Assembly.

In the ongoing third phase several early adopters have been supported to start to shift to the appropriate model suitable for their context. The Democratic Republic of Congo and South Africa were supported to focus their programme work, while Zimbabwe is redefining its footprint within the country and has gone through a restructure informed by its chosen future model. Several other countries not on the early adopters list have also sought support to start their transition and so we expect a significant shift in the next few years.

**Adopting Feminist Leadership is Fun:** In 2019 we set out to deepen understanding and practice of feminist principles to ensure that feminist leadership took root; quarterly webinars for new inductees and country teams in Kenya and the South Africa Hub were rolled-out. Online sessions to share experiences of integrating the 10 Principles of Feminist Leadership and several one-on-one sessions to provide in-depth analysis and application of the principles were held with Country Directors (DRC, South Africa, Malawi) and the Women Directors' Forum after the General Assembly.

To help countries we developed various resources on how to put feminist principles into action: the Feminist Leadership manual, developed in collaboration with MS TCDC, is a governance guide for evaluating countries' progress; alongside it are simple, fun assessments and quizzes to help staff practice the 10 Principles of Feminist Leadership.

**Strengthening Safeguarding:** We have a strong commitment to addressing Sexual Harassment, Exploitation, and Abuse (SHEA) and other safeguarding concerns (abuse of children and adults-at-risk) through a survivor-centred and intersectional feminist approach. Two years on from the start of #metoo and the revelations of abuse of power in the INGO sector there is still much work to be done. We are committed to building a sustainable approach to challenging injustice, creating a working environment and working culture that are free from harm, supporting the rights of survivors and holding those responsible to account.

This year 46 SHEA and Safeguarding concerns were raised to ActionAid International's Global SHEA and Safeguarding Team compared to 25 concerns raised in 2018. We believe that this trend does not reflect an increase in harmful behaviours, but rather increased confidence from staff, partners, and communities in raising their concerns. We know that sexual violence and abuse in all its forms is a hugely underreported area globally.

To demonstrate our commitment, we developed and rolled out four new global SHEA and Safeguarding policies to all staff, partners, and communities we work with across the Federation. The size and capacity of the Global SHEA and Safeguarding Team increased – with a global remit to embed new safeguarding policies and systems. All Federation members put in place at least one SHEA and Safeguarding Focal Point (a staff member dedicating 25% of their time to embedding SHEA and Safeguarding practice). Focal Points received face-to-face training in March.

**Strategic Shift 2:** Build a culture of learning and quality M&E that generates new knowledge, evidence-based alternatives, and communicates impact



Naima, 7 and Mushtak, 8, (l to r) whose family received financial support from an ActionAid-supported women's coalition to help them with their vegetable-selling business. Somaliland. Photo: Karin Schermbrucker/ActionAid

Over the past year the Programme Quality and Learning Team mobilised the entire Federation through the “42 Weeks of Learning” initiative to encourage learning, sharing of knowledge and development of products that captured organic knowledge from our frontline work with the people living in poverty and exclusion.

In strengthening our understanding of how change and shifts in power happen, the team facilitated the development of products that were aligned to delivering social change and a shift in power particularly towards women and young people. The team developed a Programme Quality Assurance Framework that outlines processes for strengthening programme design, quality, and impact. This includes Programme Quality Standards, Annual Learning Reviews, Participatory Reviews and Reflection guide and Programme Quality Audit processes. Staff and partners used these to develop strong HRBA programmes aligned to ActionAid's meta theory of change and packaging of ActionAid programmes to communicate the impact of our work.

To ensure our accountability to rights holders, and our commitment to learning from the communities we work with, we collaboratively developed various knowledge products to help communicate quality monitoring, evaluation and organisational learning — 16 case studies were produced with the International Platforms and EAGLES to demonstrate our meta theory of change and impact of our work.

The “42 Weeks of Learning” bulletin enhanced learning and knowledge development in the Federation. The content included case stories, videos, articles and courses available on the ActionAid learning site and knowledge management cafes. It provided a platform to curate learning and knowledge initiatives, collaboration and resources across the Federation, reaching a diverse group of staff and partners. The hosting of Senior Leader's learning space focusing on social movements and most recently the Global People's Power Forum provided space for sharing learning and testing the assumptions around the ActionAid meta theory of change and strategies, affirming our commitment to work with social movements.

We facilitated the capacity-building of our staff in understanding social change — our primary accountability — and in measuring shifts in power by supporting countries to utilize the partnership guide and framework to strengthen their own partnership policies. Online learning spaces and portals as digital working and sharing spaces for partners and staff as part of the digital transformation processes were developed to ensure cost-effective learning channels.

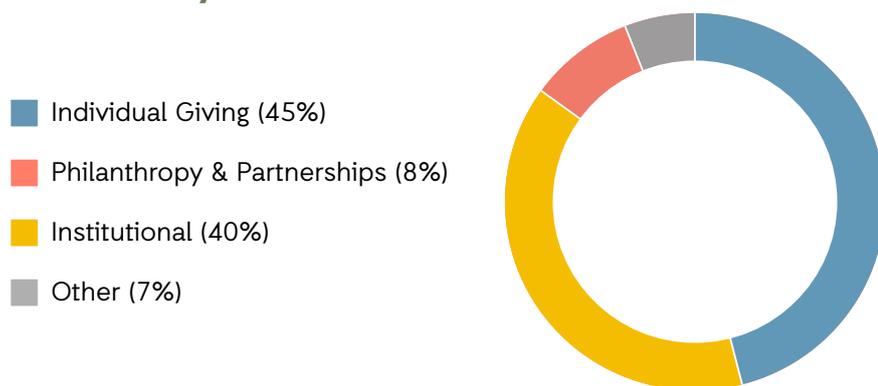
**Strategic Shift 3:** Collectively secure resources from diverse sources aligned to our vision and values to meet strategic funding needs and build a culture of fundraising innovation

In 2019 ActionAid’s institutional funding grew by 10% to £78m compared to 2018. Given the increasingly competitive nature of institutional funding, achieving this planned level of growth is testament to the excellent performance of the whole Federation. As is often the case, year-on-year country income varies but some trends (both positive and negative) seem to be emerging. Income from the Global South countries remains static at £32.5m but this hides some stand-out performances; Bangladesh, Rwanda Somaliland and Uganda all grew institutional funding by over 50%, one by 185%. Private-Public (P&P) income has also remained static but with notable successes including Greece, who doubled their P&P income, Vietnam and Myanmar (330% and 663% growth respectively) plus Nigeria and Indonesia also showed a significant increase on their 2018 income. Leveraging much larger funding, ActionAid UK’s P&P team secured £878,000 in co-financing for institutional grants.

With increased focus on donor relationships we anticipate 2020 to continue this growth and diversification. The Contract Management System went live in 2019 with all Federation members agreeing at the June General Assembly to its mandatory adoption. Whilst most of the Federation have now taken initial steps in line with this, continued support is required to embed this business-critical tool into day-to-day business development & grants management. Our catalytic grants enabled a third of all ActionAid countries to benefit from cost recovery (CR) training during 2019 – including successful peer-to-peer support from ActionAid Tanzania to ActionAid Uganda and ActionAid Zimbabwe teams. Across the Federation we have seen a growing appetite for cost recovery knowledge, and an organic growth in knowledge transfer between country teams through cluster championing. Recovering core costs within restricted funded work continues to be of crucial importance to our sustainability, and our CR investment has started to pay dividends with our initial pilot countries having increased the CR value by 50% from institutional funding in 2019.

Though individual voluntary fundraising was characterised by slow growth globally, overall we continued to see a healthy balance between funds received from individuals (including newer streams of income raised in southern countries) and funds received through government, institutional grants, and other funders:

### 2019 income by stream



In 2019 we reached more than 300 communities across Africa, Asia, and the Americas. Out of 420,000 regular supporters, around half of them account for individual Child Sponsorship links – and from countries as diverse as Australia, Sweden, Brazil, and Greece. Currently, £6 of every £10 raised from individuals is through Child Sponsorship. This secure, long-term funding means that children and their communities can continue to strive for their rights and transform their own lives. In other areas, we continued to innovate and create exciting new engagements for supporters. Through a unified spirit of collaboration, we launched new initiatives such as digital platforms and ‘Communities of Practice’ learning platforms. Alongside this, notable achievements within the Federation include ActionAid Netherlands’ Women’s Rights Challenge – a peer-to-peer fundraising campaign around violence against women and ActionAid Italy’s new chatbot Aida, a virtual assistant to increase donor engagement.

We continued to invest in growth of income and supporters and in June, the newest member of the Federation, Alianza, launched a programme in Spain with the support of ActionAid Italy. The first few months of this initiative saw 1,250 new regular givers in Spain join ActionAid’s fight for global justice. In Indonesia, a new team of more than 40 ActionAid fundraisers was established to work in shopping malls and events, while in Thailand new fundraising techniques tested included a virtual running event. A challenge shared by many of our investment countries in 2019 was scaling up their fundraising with fewer specialist suppliers available to them and rising costs in some countries; across all our investment projects we achieved 83% of our target income and 79% of our planned investment into fundraising.

In 2019, the **Child Sponsorship Modernisation** project entered an exciting phase. Building a new system to manage the complexities of our Child Sponsorship operations is a tremendously difficult and challenging feat. We are constantly navigating new ways of working so that the technical platform is in harmony with our business operations and internal processes. The Child Sponsorship and programme integration framework was piloted in five countries (Cambodia, Ghana and Kenya, Mozambique, and Vietnam) and learning generated for the full roll out across the Federation in 2020. We supported the integration of child sponsorship in the Country Model Review (CMR) process, and developed indicators and minimum standards of change results for children to be incorporated in the meta theory of change key performance basket of indicators and the annual planning guideline for countries, respectively.

**Strategic Shift 4:** To embrace a culture of innovation and actively undertake digital transformations that revolutionise our ways of work throughout the Federation

The full-scale implementation of the Global Finance System (GFS) progressed well in 2019 with 23 members on-boarded by the end of the year, representing 53% of Federation income. All regions are now covered by the GFS deployment and the total finance GFS user population reached 170 staff.

The internal grants process moved onto the GFS cloud platform for all grants flowing through the Global Secretariat, driven by unique funding source codes and aligned grant and contract management for all new sources of institutional funding linking contract management system to GFS. The financial policy update on financial systems was approved at the 2019 General Assembly, recognising the strategic importance of the GFS and reiterating that the global implementation could begin. This Assembly-approved mandate saw the first deployment of the GFS procurement module achieved in Kenya, engaging all budget holders in the procurement process. We also deployed the e-learning content for all core functions on a dedicated web platform. Early adopters of GFS are reporting improvements in productivity and confirming expectations of greater efficiencies over time.



Taposhi Rani, is an activist, campaigning for women to become leaders during emergencies and to become protectors of their environment, Bangladesh. Photo: Fabeha Monir/ActionAid

# OVERSIGHT OF OUR FEDERATION

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## STRENGTHENING OUR GOVERNANCE

As we continue to drive the agenda of networked governance forward, there was enhanced board-to-board dialogue within the Federation. The Board conducted its annual self-review and reflected on its performance through an interactive survey and discussion.

The review showed a strong dedication and commitment of trustees, a shared perspective on goals and mission, and considerable convergence on key issues affecting the Federation. In addition to reviewing the capacity of the Board as a whole, the Board also evaluated the performance of individual Board members in order to maximize their contribution; create space for mentoring and capacity development; and explore individual member's self-reflection from the feedback received.

Success of the Director's Forum and Assembly — where important building blocks were agreed — was a highlight. At the joint day during the 2019 Assembly, we held a very exciting dialogue between governance and management of the Federation around three key issues.

Firstly, we assessed together our collective progress against Strategy 2028 and had an open and honest conversation on the need to improve our self-assurance and ensure we manage power inequities in the Federation and continue to build our financial sustainability.

Secondly, given the Secretary-General transition, we had an opportunity to collect views about the Federation's expectations in the position, which guided the Board on leading the recruitment process.

Thirdly, we had an excellent debate around the challenging context that sees shrinking civic space and the rise of right-wing populism. We assessed our own experiences on dealing with both phenomena in various countries and learning from each other how best we could confront both authoritarianism and the new racist, misogynist, and homophobic political forces.

A key priority in the coming year will be undertaking a robust Federation Governance Review which will look back 16 years into the implementation of our internationalisation commitments and three years into the implementation of Strategy 2028, and measure and monitor the effectiveness of its institutional governance practice. The review will evaluate and assess whether the current operating model has the capacity to critically address the Federation's growing and emerging needs, in view of improving the effectiveness of the governance model and the need for systems to remain relevant, effective, and impactful.

At the Board Retreat held in Johannesburg, South Africa in December 2019, the Board agreed to the following strategic priorities for 2020:

- a) Onboarding of the new Secretary General and working to ensure that the Global Secretariat has the support needed for it to play its critical service role to the Federation.
- b) Mobilize governance bodies in the Federation to effectively engage in the discussion and decision on the long-term finance and funding strategy as a critical and urgent priority essential for the Federation's future.
- c) Ensure that key change processes and policies adopted by the General Assembly are advanced as effectively as possible and accountability provided to members.
- d) Rally the Federation around a more unified and more focused agenda that connects our work from local to global level.
- e) Ensure more collective responsibility by members for a unified approach to key challenges facing the Federation.
- f) The Board will be assessing its performance against the above priorities at the end of 2020.



Delmy and her mother walk around their village during ActionAid's annual child message collection in Semanzana, Guatemala.  
Photo: Karin Schermbrucker/ActionAid

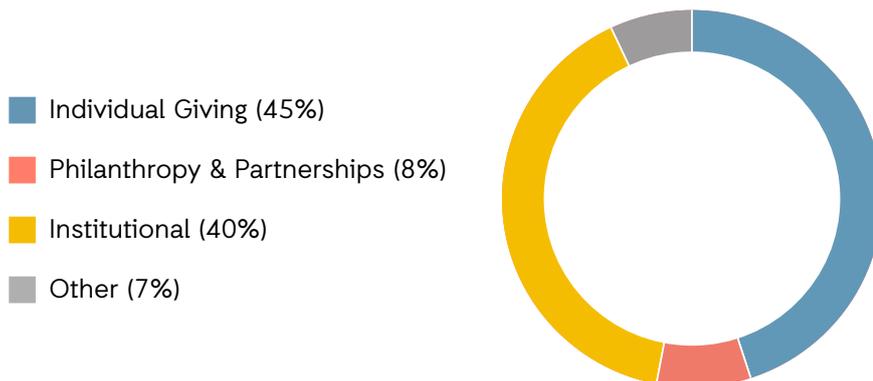
# RESOURCING AND ACCOUNTING FOR OUR INCOME

## FINANCE AND FUNDING SUMMARY

### INCOME

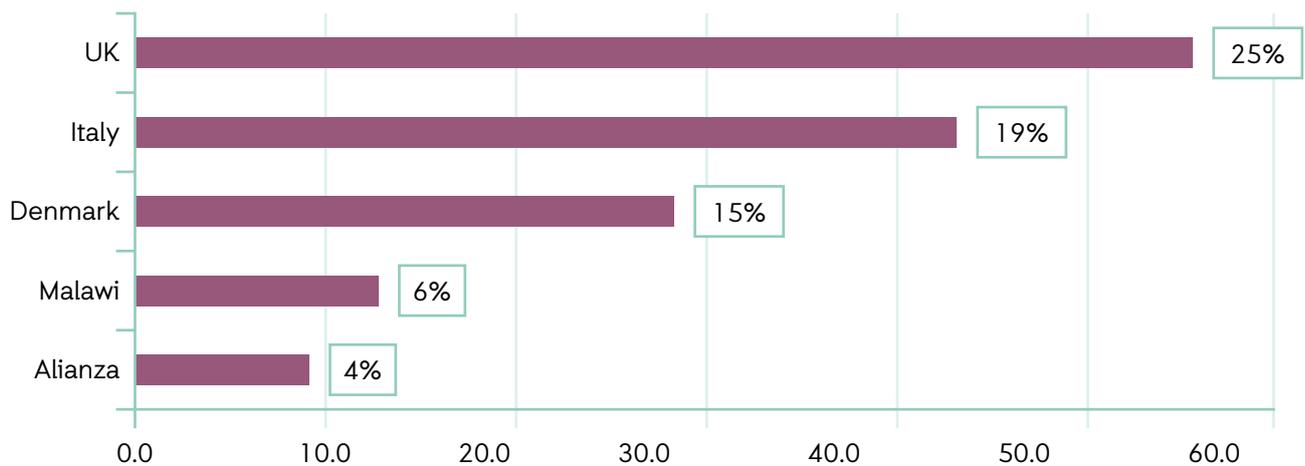
ActionAid's total income in 2019 was €225 million (2018: €210 million), an increase of 7.1% on 2018. The mix of income shows an increase in Institutional income from 2018 of 19%, slightly offset by falls in Individual Giving (2.6%) and Philanthropy & Partnerships (6%) in the same period. Total unrestricted income grew by 1% to €72 million (2018 fall of 3% to €71 million).

### ActionAid income split by major category



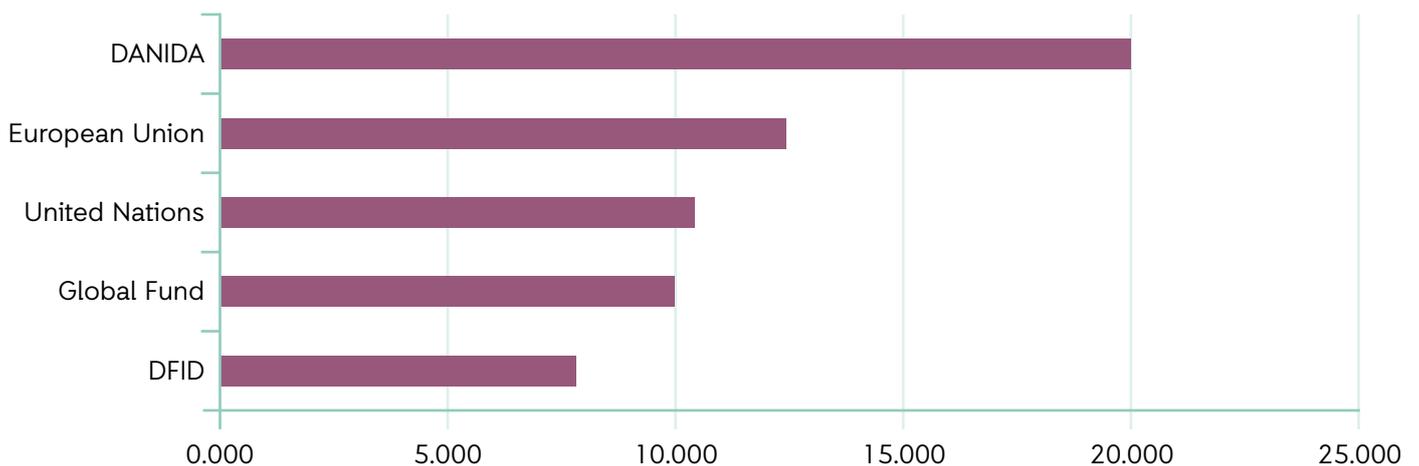
### Largest country incomes (€ millions and % of total)

Just under 70% of the Federation's total external income is generated by the five countries set out in the table below. Malawi, Denmark and Alianza's income is overwhelmingly from Institutional sources, whereas Italy and the UK are each a mix of income types that is weighted towards Individual Giving.



### Largest donors (€ millions)

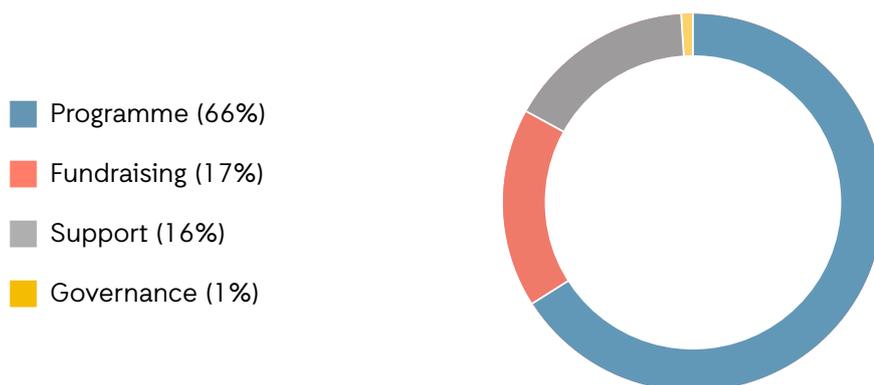
DANIDA (Danish International Development Agency) was our largest institutional donor in 2019 and 2018, contributing approximately €20 million (2018: €18 million). The great majority of funding from the Global Fund was to Malawi.



## EXPENDITURE

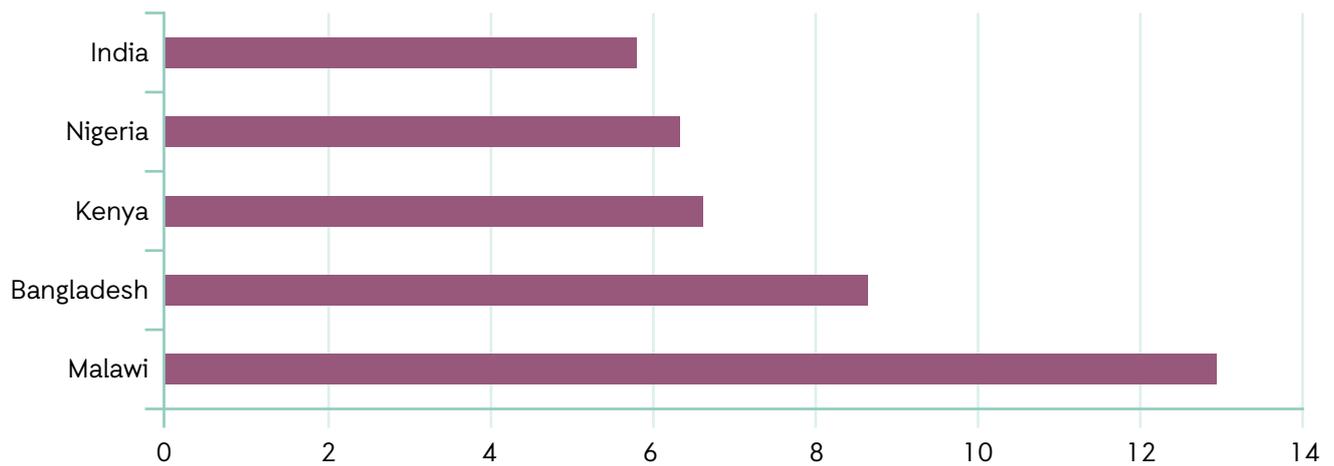
ActionAid's total expenditure in 2019 was €229 million (2018: €211 million). The increase in expenditure is in line with the increase in income and has been on Programme and Fundraising costs. As a result, the percentage of total expenditure spent on both Programme and Fundraising costs has increased by 1% in 2019 when compared to 2018, whereas support costs have fallen by 2%. The split of costs in 2019 is as follows:

### ActionAid expenditure split by major category



## Largest country expenditure (€ millions and %, and % of total)

The countries implementing programmes with the largest expenditures are as follows:



## RESERVES

Overall, the reserves position remains strong, and there are strong cash balances across the Federation:

	2019 (€M)	2018 (€M)
Restricted	38.1	42.4
Unrestricted	40.7	36.5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>78.8</b>	<b>78.9</b>

Restricted reserves are those that must be spent in strict accordance with the wishes of the respective donors, whereas unrestricted reserves may be spent at the discretion of ActionAid.

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**Front Cover: Masimbi Violaine, a member of Kotwibu (means ending poverty) women's group supported by ActionAid Rwanda to end poverty. Masimbi is weeding the potato fields they own with the members of the group in Shingiro – Musanze district. Photo: ActionAid**

**July 2020**