



## Frequently Asked Questions

### Our Progress from Austcare to ActionAid

#### What is ActionAid?

ActionAid is an international anti-poverty organisation with a vision of a world without poverty in which every person can exercise their right to a life of dignity. ActionAid was formed in 1972 and for over 30 years, they have been growing and expanding to where they are today – working in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas fighting global poverty and tackling the injustice and inequity that cause it.

#### What does ActionAid do?

ActionAid's mission statement is to work with poor and excluded people to eradicate poverty and injustice. Austcare and ActionAid share a fundamental philosophy of building human security at the community level, working 'with' people rather than 'for' them. Like Austcare, ActionAid works with local partners in all of their projects to ensure that activities and decisions are based on local knowledge and experience.

Last year alone, ActionAid reached over 13 million of the world's poorest and most vulnerable people, helping them fight for and claim their rights to food, shelter, work, education, healthcare and a voice in the decisions that affect their lives. ActionAid is currently working in 19 countries in Africa, 9 countries in Central and South America and 11 countries in Asia.

#### Why is Austcare becoming ActionAid ?

Austcare is in a strong position after 40 years of working closely with refugees and the displaced and assisting the world's most vulnerable and marginalised people who have been affected by conflict and natural disaster. The Austcare Board of Directors has carefully considered how we could do more for vulnerable people by becoming part of a large international NGO whilst maintaining our distinct Australian identity. The decision to become ActionAid in 2009 means that the impact of our work in both emergency relief and longer term development will be considerably strengthened. We will also bring our own expertise and experience in key areas of work such as protection and landmine action to the alliance.

Austcare has a long history of partnering with numerous local and international NGOs and we have enjoyed a successful relationship with ActionAid over the last three years in a number of countries. Over the past few years, we have been working closely with ActionAid International, including an integrated development program with ActionAid Cambodia, and believe that we can continue to achieve more together than we can separately. Similarly, in the area of emergency relief, we initially worked with ActionAid in Sri Lanka and Indonesia in response to the 2004 Asian tsunami. In the last twelve months, our relationship with ActionAid has enabled us to respond to a number of major emergencies, including Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar in May 2008.

## **How will Austcare's work have increased impact as ActionAid?**

Austcare will increase the impact of our work on disempowered and vulnerable people by becoming part of the ActionAid network. We began working with ActionAid because their values are aligned with ours and they have a similar approach to working with vulnerable people.

Being part of ActionAid will increase our reach and effectiveness and provide access to a global pool of expertise and resources. This will mean that we are better able to use our resources and your donations to have a greater impact on the lives of vulnerable people.

To increase our impact, we need to significantly increase the awareness of our work in Australia. ActionAid will invest in our fundraising capacity which will enable us to grow and have a greater impact on vulnerable people around the world.

Austcare has recently developed our capacity to advocate on a number of key issues that are important to our mission. ActionAid plays a crucial global role in speaking on behalf of marginalised and vulnerable people and helping them claim their rights. As part of a large network, our already growing reach and influence on government policy in Australia will be dramatically increased.

## **What is ActionAid's approach?**

ActionAid's approach to poverty eradication focuses on human rights. By taking a 'human rights' based approach to development ActionAid understands and explains poverty as a direct consequence of the denial or violation of human rights and the unequal power dynamics that prevent people from claiming their rights.

ActionAid sees the process of enabling people to claim their human rights as important as the outcome. For example, ActionAid raises critical consciousness of human rights in communities to create sustainable changes to people's lives, not just short-term solutions. They work on addressing people's basic needs as rights they can claim such as the right to food, shelter, work and education. They also work hard to ensure the

participation and action of poor, excluded and vulnerable people in everything they do and pay particular attention to power dynamics in less developed countries.

### **What does “association” and “affiliation” mean?**

Becoming an associate of ActionAid has enabled Austcare to be an observer on ActionAid’s board. When we affiliate with ActionAid, we will become a full member of the ActionAid network and have a vote on ActionAid International’s board. As an affiliate, Austcare will formally become ActionAid in 2009.

### **Will Austcare be ‘swallowed up’ or ‘taken over’?**

When we affiliate with ActionAid, Austcare will change our name to ActionAid. While we will have a new name, many important factors will remain the same. Our governance structure and our board won’t change and, in fact, one of our board members will join the ActionAid board, which will give us a voice in the network at the highest level. For example Austcare’s President, The Rt Hon Ian Sinclair AC, attended the ActionAid December 2007 board meeting in Johannesburg.

ActionAid is structured in such a way that all Affiliates have an equal voice in how the organisation works regardless of whether the affiliate is from a rich country like Australia or a poorer country such as Ghana in Africa. Over the last couple of years, Austcare has been giving greater responsibilities to our country offices, enabling them to have more autonomy and independence in the way they work. As ActionAid, this move will continue and we are aiming for our country offices in Timor-Leste, Cambodia, Indonesia and the Middle East to become affiliates in their own right.

### **Will Austcare’s core focus on refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and emergencies be maintained?**

Our Protection program, which protects the human rights of refugees and IDPs, will continue to expand. Emergency response is a core focus area for both Austcare and ActionAid. In emergencies, ActionAid responds to help the most vulnerable people, who are often refugees and people internally displaced by conflict and natural disaster. Like Austcare, ActionAid continues to work closely with poor communities long after the initial emergency has passed to help them rebuild their lives and reduce their vulnerability to future disasters and conflicts.

### **Will the level of transparency be maintained?**

Honesty and transparency are two of ActionAid’s core values. They aim to be accountable at all levels for the effectiveness of their actions and open in their judgements and communications with others. The level of transparency and accountability in ActionAid was crucial to Austcare’s decision to affiliate with ActionAid as we emphasise transparency and accountability in all that we do.



## How will my donations be spent under ActionAid?

ActionAid aims to ensure at least 80% of funds raised are used in international projects. For example, in 2006/07, ActionAid UK sent 84% of funds to the field. As ActionAid, we will still operate under the ACFID (Australian Council for International Development) Code of Conduct. As such, we will still publish an Annual Report, which is available on our website, and the report will provide full financial details of the past year's operations and spending.

## How will a bequest to Austcare be spent under ActionAid?

If you have left a gift to Austcare in your will, your gift will automatically be transferred when we legally become ActionAid. If your will contains specific instructions as to how your gift should be spent, they will be honoured. If your gift is to be given to our general funds, then we will decide how best to spend it according to the needs of the people we work with on the ground.

## What role is there for Australian staff in the global operation?

All Austcare staff will remain and our head office in Sydney won't change. Our current staff will become employees of ActionAid, enjoying all of the additional opportunities of working with a large international NGO.

## When will this happen?

Assuming that affiliation to ActionAid progresses smoothly, it is planned that we will launch as ActionAid in the first half of 2009.

## Where can I learn more about ActionAid?

You can find out more about ActionAid at their website: [www.actionaid.org](http://www.actionaid.org)