

# VALUE FOR MONEY AND ADVOCACY

# POVERTY

## How is advocacy linked to value for money?

Advocacy is a vital part of Christian Aid's work, but what is it? Broadly, it's how we and our partners work together to try to influence leaders, governments and other bodies that hold power to consider the views and needs of poor and marginalised people when making decisions.

Our approach to advocacy relates very closely to how we assess value for money (VfM) in our work – achieving significant lasting change for as many of the most vulnerable people as possible with the money and resources we have. We measure VfM by the effectiveness, equity and 'leverage' of projects – that is, the extent to which benefits can be multiplied. Projects that are more effective, reach more of the most vulnerable people or are able to generate significant additional support and resources tend to be those that have had effective advocacy strategies, as illustrated below.

Working through our partners in countries across Africa, Asia and the Middle East, and Latin America and the Caribbean, we help marginalised and excluded people come together and develop skills they need to find out about and speak up for their rights. By training and supporting people to protect their rights in this way, we can ensure that communities continue to exert positive change long after a particular project ends, bringing improvements to the lives of larger numbers of people. Skills are then shared within and between communities, extending the benefits still further.

## Reaching the most vulnerable

One example of how we have used advocacy to benefit large numbers of vulnerable people can be seen when considering the work of our partner the Social Enterprise Development Foundation of West Africa (SEND) in Ghana. Debt cancellation through the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative, led by the World Bank and IMF in response to significant NGO lobbying in the

1990s, released much-needed funds for development in the country. However, many of those who should have benefited – including adults living with disabilities – were unaware of what they were entitled to.

SEND tackled this by working with marginalised communities in northern Ghana – the poorest region of the country – to speak up about the issues that affect them and to ensure that they benefit from public funds. In the town of Tamale, this included ensuring that people with disabilities are represented on the District Health Monitoring Committee (DHMC). As a result of this work, 9 out of 11 districts SEND works with have now released the statutory two per cent allocation in their budgets for disabled people.



Christian Aid/Elaine Dugheran

## Achieving effectiveness

Christian Aid's Kenyan partner Maji na Ufanisi provides advocacy training for young people in Nairobi's informal settlements or slums. This approach ensures VfM by giving people the skills they need to make positive change in their communities.

Two million people, half of Nairobi's population, live in informal settlements crammed into only five per cent of the city's residential area and just one per cent of all land in the city. Most live in close proximity to wealthier areas of the city with functional services, yet have no access to adequate housing, clean water, sanitation facilities, healthcare or other essential services.

Maji na Ufanisi has worked in Kiambu in the north-east of Nairobi since the late 1990s. As part of this work, it provided a total of

£768 to train 30 young people from Kiambiu slum in advocacy skills in order to lobby their local government to provide essential services for the community.

As a result, Kiambiu's youth group successfully secured local government support to collect rubbish from this informal settlement. This has resulted in a fortnightly collection of which any one of the settlement's 60,000 residents can take advantage. Each collection costs 10,000 shillings (£77) to run, of which the local government pays 8,000 shillings (£62) and the youth group contributes 2,000 shillings (£15). The scheme has already been running for three years, meaning the community has received services valued at almost £5,000. The collections are on-going and so the settlement continues to benefit from this advocacy while the young people who received the training retain those skills and can continue to lobby for other essential services for their community.



### Addressing inequality

Our VfM approach places an emphasis on tackling inequality. Globally, three-quarters of the world's poorest live in middle-income countries. In emerging economies, such as India, growth is often shared unequally and so around two in every five Indians live on less than 1.25 US dollars a day. Women are among the most marginalised within society. Tens of millions of single, divorced or widowed women are customarily excluded from many areas of life, subject to significant discrimination and often violent

abuse. They can feel extremely ostracised and alone.

Christian Aid has been working with the Single Women Alone (SWA) network, an organisation working in Jharkhand, one of India's poorest regions, since 2006. In 2011/12, we provided a grant of £45,796, allowing the partner to tackle the systems and structures that discriminate against these women. With this, it lobbied for better access to services, and in that same year, helped 4,187 illiterate and vulnerable single women secure £1.68m worth of government benefits including pension provision and child support.

### Achieving large-scale impact

Ghana's government-led Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP) was developed to reduce hunger and malnutrition, increase school enrolment, attendance and retention, and boost domestic food production and local farming families' incomes. Christian Aid supports partner SEND Ghana to ensure government programmes such as GSFP are carried out efficiently and reach the people who need these services most, thus promoting VfM.

Since SEND became involved, the number of children receiving school meals has tripled to 51,151. And now a new partnership with the World Food Programme negotiated by committees established by SEND Ghana will ensure meals for almost every school in Ghana's poorest Upper West region. Year-on-year increases in child enrolment are currently at 141 per cent.

For communities in Ghana and around the world, education on their rights and entitlements – and advocacy support to allow local people to secure these – means they have greater control over how resources are spent. This approach provides an opportunity for the poorest and most vulnerable to take control of their own futures, and also to see tangible benefits that address their most pressing needs.

# VALUE FOR MONEY: STRIVING FOR EFFECTIVENESS AND EQUITY IN BANGLADESH

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Christian Aid has been working in partnership with the Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS) since 2005. BCAS is a leading policy, research and implementation institute in south Asia, which has worked on promoting good practice in sustainable development for more than 25 years. In that time, it has striven to tackle issues such as inequality, weak governance, lack of participation, environmental degradation, climate change and water shortages.



In Bangladesh, water provision is frequently treated by the government as something to aim for, not a right that they are bound to deliver. As a result, communities have become reliant on solutions provided by NGOs rather than speaking up to demand that the government fulfil its obligations. In the past, women – who tend to be the main collectors and distributors of water – were rarely asked what was best for their communities and, unfortunately, many solutions turned out to be inappropriate because research was not undertaken to establish what would suit specific areas. Over the years, these non-participatory and untested approaches led to a trail of broken and redundant wells, but even more tragically to the discovery that high arsenic levels in underground water were poisoning thousands across the country.

Over the last decade, Christian Aid has been piloting and adopting new development

approaches in Bangladesh to deliver better value for money (VfM) to communities, supporters and donors alike. By this we mean achieving the most significant and sustainable change for as many of the most excluded and vulnerable people as possible with the money and resources available to us.

## Reaching the most vulnerable

Between 2005 and 2008, Christian Aid and BCAS piloted a programme in five of the poorest and most environmentally challenged areas of Bangladesh to help people living there realise their right to sufficient clean safe water.

In an attempt to ensure sustainability, thus promoting VfM, the pilot placed a great emphasis on providing affordable low-tech solutions, while helping women and community organisations have their voices heard. The latter was achieved through establishing *pani parishad*, or water councils, which are led by women, who also make up more than 50 per cent of members.

## Achieving effectiveness

BCAS not only conducted scientific analysis of water supplies in the selected communities, but also arranged technical demonstrations of possible solutions for the water councils. The partner and councils then came together to agree on and implement the options they felt were most appropriate for communities. Solutions ranged from lobbying local government for water pipe extensions or wells, to constructing concrete water tanks or towers. In all five regions, the water councils proved a powerful force for change and the process delivered benefits beyond improved health, especially for women. Having a safe water supply closer to home meant that they had more time to work on other tasks, thus boosting their household

income. Women also felt safer as they now did not have to walk such long distances to fetch water, and there was also evidence that because couples had more time to relax at the end of the day, there was a reduction in domestic violence.

Meanwhile, the water councils gave communities a sense of empowerment, as they were a forum through which people could demand that the local government fulfil their rights to safe water and address other matters, such as land disputes, education, transport and housing problems. In some areas, this approach and the resulting water solutions caught on and neighbouring communities copied the water council approach, as well as the solutions themselves in some cases.

The long-term success of the project was evident in the immediate aftermath of Cyclone Sidr in 2007, when an ACT Alliance NGO worker visiting south-west Bangladesh noticed that the villages included in BCAS's women and water rights project were back up on their feet and repairing storm damage within days, much quicker than other villages. 'What is striking is how well people seem to have got back to everyday life. People in the surrounding rice and brickfields are back to work; women are washing clothes in the river; the narrow, muddy roads are being paved as we pass by and everywhere there are bicycle taxis carrying wooden poles, tin and other construction-material,' said the visitor.

However, some of the deepest changes achieved were related to the women's own perspectives of their rights and importance

within their communities. Minu Basar, a *pani parishad* member in Mongla district in the delta region, explained, 'Before, we women would never leave our houses or sit with men. Now we sit with men and we aren't afraid to go outside and talk to people. As a woman I now feel very good. I have learned to talk. I am confident. In my heart, I have weight.'

### How did this pilot project deliver value for money?

Christian Aid believes that delivering VfM in development practices is not simply about numbers, be it driving down costs by seeking the cheapest options or reaching the greatest number of people for the lowest cost per person or household. Rather, it is about finding the most cost-efficient but effective solutions that deliver significant and sustainable change for the poorest, most vulnerable and most excluded people. To understand what works and what does not, it is important to test theories of change and development practice in well-planned ways. Careful monitoring and learning can then be used to inform future development practice.

Christian Aid and BCAS's pilot project set out to test a theory of change that put science, rights, women and the environment at the heart of community development processes in Bangladesh. Overall, the results provided much better VfM than previous development work, which simply aimed to create access to water through tube well installations. The project showed how a broader approach, which takes several factors into account, is the basis for far more sustainable and appropriate outcomes that benefit a much wider section of the community.

While a subsequent shortage of funding limited the scope of the project to just over 30 communities in five project areas, BCAS and Christian Aid are still applying the lessons learned from this project in the development of approaches to helping people earn a living in complex and fragile areas.





# VALUE FOR MONEY: USING CHRISTIAN AID RESOURCES TO SECURE MORE GOVERNMENT INVESTMENT

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Christian Aid's approach to value for money (VfM) is about achieving the deepest and most lasting change for as many of the most vulnerable and excluded people as we can within the limits of the resources and money available. We believe our approach to tackling some of the most entrenched causes of poverty by supporting partner organisations' advocacy activities is one of the most effective ways to achieve such results.



## Working with the most excluded

Christian Aid has been working in partnership with Safai Karmachari Andolan (SKA) since 1996. SKA is fighting to end the practice of manual scavenging – cleaning out dry latrines and lavatories by hand – which traditionally has been the only work available for certain people from the lowest dalit caste in Indian society.

While SKA is winning this battle it has faced considerable challenges. The caste system in India is extremely entrenched, having been in existence for thousands of years. It is an almost accepted feature of life that different castes will perform different types of work, and that there will be discrimination and exclusion. This is reflected in systems of power that do little to challenge the status quo. For example, in 1993, a law was passed that prohibited the employment of manual scavengers. Yet in the 19 years since this law was passed, not one conviction has been made, and even government institutions continue to use manual scavengers in defiance of, or simply because of their disregard for, this law.

To end manual scavenging presents significant challenges to government – such as finding alternative work for the many thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of people employed as manual scavengers, and supplying funds to replace the country's dry latrines.

## Achieving deep, lasting change with limited resources

Between 2007 and 2011, the average total investment that Christian Aid made to SKA was just over £97,000. But as a result of this investment, by 2011 the government had increased the budget that it allotted to abolishing manual scavenging by 98 per cent to a total of just under £25m. This represents a ratio of 1:51 in terms of Christian Aid's own contribution to funding the initiative over the five-year period versus funding from the Indian government to help manual scavengers out of this degrading profession and into more dignified, gainful ways of making a living.

## Achieving effectiveness

SKA's successes also illustrate well how Christian Aid ensures VfM in other terms. As a result of its work, SKA says:

- roughly one million fewer people are now involved in manual scavenging
- in Andhra Pradesh, the state government claims that the practice has now been eradicated, and 100 per cent of dry latrines destroyed
- there has been a 95 per cent reduction in the practice in four other states in India
- 12,000 manual scavengers have voluntarily liberated themselves from this work in the last two years, and more



than 80,000 have been helped into new employment

- the federal government has established four task forces to look into ending manual scavenging, and the prime minister has personally decreed that he wants to see it abolished.

We are clearly seeing some highly significant, profound and long-lasting improvements to the lives of some of the poorest and most marginalised people in India. And this is being achieved on the basis of a relatively modest investment. This is therefore an example of extremely good VfM.

### Learning from leadership

A vital element of drawing VfM from development work is how best practice and other learning is used to refine and improve how we work. If an investment leads to a better way of operating across numerous different projects, then this indicates greater value for the original investment. What are some of the lessons that can be learned

from SKA, for example? A key characteristic of this campaign has been the multifaceted approach taken by the partner, which has brought high court cases, organised street campaigns, lobbied individual politicians, symbolically destroyed dry latrines, and conducted multimedia action – throughout the country. For example, with one protest march SKA covered 20 states and 20,000km, and to publicise it sent out 145 press releases and organised 184 public meetings attended by 55,000 people.

There is also a strong indication here that larger, more significant change could be the result of both the length of the campaign, and the length of the partnership between the partner and Christian Aid. Certainly, the 16 years that the partnership has currently been running is far longer than any normal project duration. That is not to say that all projects need to aim to last this long. However, it certainly could indicate that longer-term relationships with partners enable long-term strategies and campaigns to develop and strengthen over time, adding to their eventual impact.

Another key element of this project's success lies in the networks that were built between groups of people working as manual scavengers in different areas. Before this, many in this profession reported that they felt isolated and unable to speak up, but since being put in contact with other groups they feel empowered to speak up, claim their rights and fight against this practice. This is an excellent example of a very low-cost way of really maximising benefit and impact across a wide geographical area.



# VALUE FOR MONEY: A BLUEPRINT FOR DEVELOPMENT IN DISASTER PRONE AREAS

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Effectiveness and equity lie at the heart of Christian Aid's approach to achieving better value for money (VfM) in our programmes. In some situations, such as fragile or disaster prone regions, development projects can be hampered by floods, droughts, conflicts and other crises. This can result in the perception that development work does not offer VfM.

For this reason, in 2005 Christian Aid began adopting a risk-centred approach to development. Using the Participatory Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (PVCA) as a tool to ensure that risks are tackled from the start of a development project, we believe we can deliver more sustainable projects that help communities build resilience to risks and disasters while at the same time overcoming the problems that keep them in poverty. Ultimately, this approach provides better VfM, as it deals with both immediate and longer-term needs and risks, achieving as deep and lasting a change for as many vulnerable and marginalised people as possible within the limits of the resources and money available.

## Demonstrating effectiveness

Using Christian Aid's PVCA approach, vulnerable and marginalised communities are supported to analyse the short- to long-term threats they face, and then to identify potential solutions, preferably with the involvement of others such as technical experts and local government representatives. This process of understanding risks and deciding where resources and knowledge lie to overcome them helps communities to take the lead in their own development. A Community Action Plan then provides the basis for negotiating with local authorities, NGOs and donors in order to get the right support at the right time to address risk and vulnerability. In this way, government and donor support is more relevant, better targeted and ultimately more effective.



## Reaching the most vulnerable

In recent years, Christian Aid in Burkina Faso has been working with three local partner organisations to support more than 30,000 people in 38 of the poorest and most vulnerable communities to help them find a way of earning a living that is resistant to crises and disasters. Through the PVCA process, the communities ranked frequent drought, floods, insect attacks and disease epidemics among the threats that affect their ability to provide for themselves. Almost all the communities expressed a need to develop new diversified ways to earn a living, to improve health and to implement measures to cope with pest attacks, among others.

In the remote village of Masboré in central-northern Burkina Faso, a range of activities introduced after the community undertook the PVCA and action planning process in 2009 made it better able to cope when experiencing severe food shortages in 2011-12. Health programmes such as nutrition and epidemic prevention training for mothers have helped reduce malnutrition and sickness in children, livestock vaccination and new fodder storage techniques supported by the local agricultural services department have kept animals healthier for longer, while the community used its action plan to persuade the local government to construct and resource a mother and child clinic within the village.



Goat and sheep breeding for the most vulnerable households was chosen as an alternative to cereal production as it gives a family something to sell if the harvest fails, as it did in 2011. This was tested in a pilot project. Alizeta Sawadogo, a 60-year-old widow, received two goats, which produced four kids. She sold two of the offspring when food shortages began to affect her family and with the income she was able to buy food and pay for other important family needs. This has greatly reduced her dependency on food relief. Based on this success, Christian Aid and Department for International Development funding is now helping the community increase the scale of livestock breeding to benefit other vulnerable households.

The Action Plan has also brought about better organisation within the community. By working together, households can act faster to prevent floods or locusts damaging crops. They are using local techniques to plant trees, which will provide more food for animals and better flood protection. And the introduction of composting is improving crop yields, leading to more secure food supplies.

Christian Aid and our local partner organisation Reseau MARP have helped link the community with relevant government,

technical and financial support services and are supporting the community to revisit the PVCA process to make sure that their action plan remains relevant.

All these activities and results were achieved through an initial investment of approximately £8,250. This is just half of the average amount that Christian Aid is currently spending in communities affected by the current food crisis in Burkina Faso for a six-month emergency relief programme. As community resilience builds, Christian Aid hopes to see a reduction in the cost and need for emergency responses. Mahamadi Ouedraogo, from one of the communities in Burkina Faso using the PVCA approach, testifies to its benefit: 'Before the PVCA process, NGOs came and told us what to do and we just did what they said. Now we understand the risks ourselves, and what is needed to solve problems. We do the activities we want to do.'

### Achieving more for less

Christian Aid and local partners have now introduced the PVCA approach in more than 370 communities in at least 20 countries. There, they are using their action plans to help secure additional financial and material resources, as well as technical support and knowledge to implement risk and poverty reduction measures. For example, in the conflict-affected Bethlehem governorate of the occupied Palestinian territory, the NGO Development Centre and Agencie Français de Développement have responded to the Beit Skariya community's action plan with a £20,000 grant for a women's health, nutrition, livelihood and psychosocial programme, while in the same area, DanChurchAid is providing £70,000 to meet solar energy equipment requested by nomadic Bedouin households.

In Kenya, two rural communities used the community planning process to persuade the county government to resource two large dam projects, which are providing crop irrigation for a population of 18,300.

By addressing risk first, the results to date show that with relatively small investments huge strides can be made towards achieving lasting impact in disaster prone settings. Christian Aid is now increasing the scope of this approach to address different risks and threats in very complex environments, such as sprawling urban slums.

