

WASH STRATEGY 2021>2025

ACTION AGAINST HUNGER



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INTRODUCTION

Action Against Hunger is a globally recognised Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) actor in the field of humanitarian emergencies and the fight against undernutrition. We deliver assistance in the sectors of Nutrition, Health, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), Food Security and Livelihoods (FSL), Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Mental Health and Care Practices.

In 2020, Action Against Hunger reached over 25 million individuals across 46 countries, more than in any previous year. Our WASH activities supported more than 9.6 million people (International Annual Report 2020¹).

Action Against Hunger has a long-standing track record of **supporting the implementation of WASH programs** in resource-poor environments in collaboration with local partners. Country strategies aim at progressively realizing the human right to water and sanitation and reaching the water-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to ultimately:

- Reduce WASH-related morbidity and mortality among people affected by crisis.
- Achieve the "basic" level of WASH services for all and progressively and sustainably
 move towards safely managed WASH facilities at the level of households, communities
 and institutions.

We engage in humanitarian WASH coordination by contributing to several platforms such as the national and global WASH clusters, the WASH Humanitarian Roadmap and the Global Task Force on Cholera Control.

We generate WASH evidence by collaborating with world-renowned research institutes such as the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Johns Hopkins University, Tufts University and the University of Avignon.

We push the frontiers of WASH technical and social engineering with partners such as Aquassistance, Waterpreneurs and Renewgies.

^{1.} Action Against Hunger, International Annual Report, 2020 [Online]

We share our WASH expertise and knowledge at annual conferences such as the World Water Week, the UNC Water and Health Conference and the Emergency Environmental Health Forum, and by organizing WASH humanitarian Master courses in collaboration with universities in Burkina Faso, Jordan and Spain.

This strategy sets out the direction for the WASH department of the Action Against Hunger International Network from 2021 to 2025. Action Against Hunger's WASH strategy **follows our International Strategic Plan 2021-2025** (Figure 1). It is built on **five overarching programmatic principles** that govern our way of working. It is further composed of (i) Core programmatic approaches, which cut across all our activities and are mandatory for our programs, as well as (ii) **Programmatic priorities**, which are the areas of intervention where ACF can have the greatest added value to meet today's challenges of the WASH sector.

The strategy is designed to cover all phases of the humanitarian-development nexus, to strengthen WASH systems while ensuring the continuity, coverage and affordability of essential WASH goods and services. All the priorities, particularly the ones listed under pillar 1 "Save and Protect lives" and pillar 2 "Build Resilience", are therefore complementary.

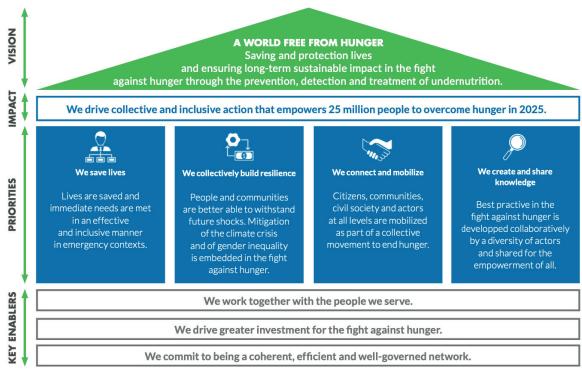


Figure 1: International Strategic Plan 2021-2025

This strategy has been primarily written for Action Against Hunger country offices and local partners, but also for other WASH actors, national or local authorities, emergency response coordinating bodies, contingency planners, program evaluators, donors and any individuals or organisations involved in providing WASH services.

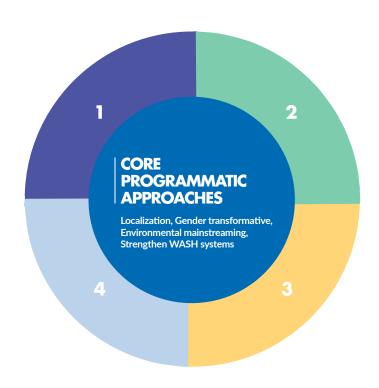
PROGRAMMATIC PRINCIPLES

Five overarching principles govern our way of working:

- WE ARE ACCOUNTABLE TO AFFECTED PEOPLE. Our interventions focus on what people can do to fulfill their needs and achieve their aspirations. People of all age, gender, culture, heritage, language, belief and identity are involved in all stages of a project, are given the space to make decisions, and steer the response in order to fulfill their rights and needs.
- **WE PROTECT PEOPLE.** The assistance provided does not expose people to further hazards, violence or human rights abuses or violations. We identify and reduce the potential negative effects of our interventions in line with the Do No Harm principle. In accordance with fundamental human rights, we make sure that access to water, sanitation and hygiene services is sufficient, safe, acceptable, physically accessible, dignifying and affordable.
- WE STRIVE TO INCREASE THE QUALITY OF OUR INTERVENTIONS. Beyond building reliable and sustainable WASH services that respect national, international and cluster WASH standards, we are committed to ensuring that services are safe, inclusive, participatory and effective. With the international WASH community, we seek to maximize accountability and quality by being transparent about our achievements and measuring the actual impact of our interventions.
- WE JOIN FORCES WITH A WIDE RANGE OF LOCAL, NATIONAL AND GLOBAL PARTNERS such as civil society organisations, local governments, public entities, the United Nations, the private sector, universities and research institutes, platforms and networks to promote inter-institutional coordination. We specifically recognize the legitimacy and know-how of local actors. It is only together that we can bring the right combination of resources, experience and understanding needed to achieve our objectives.
- WE USE EVIDENCE TO DEVELOP OUR PROGRAMS. Effective decisions are based on the analysis of data, information and experience. We are committed to better prioritize the information we collect, to increase our capacity to conduct qualitative assessments and to be at the forefront of operational research in order to generate evidence to influence decision-making.

PROGRAMMATIC PRIORITIES

Programmatic priorities are the areas of intervention where ACF can have the greatest added value to meet today's challenges of the WASH sector. Each programmatic priority is broken down into **objectives** to be achieved by 2025 and the corresponding **indicators** as a means to monitor progress from 2021 to 2025. **Core programmatic approaches cut across all our activities and are mandatory for all our programs.** The strategy also lists indicative interventions, which are examples on how to reach the targets. These are by no means comprehensive, mandatory or relevant to all contexts.





WE SAVE LIVES AND RESPOND TO PEOPLE'S NEEDS

Focus WASH responses in areas with high public-Health risks

Better understand social norms and values to trigger change

Strengthen WASH surge capacity

Mainstream market-based approach

Support humanitarian coordination



WE COLLECTIVELY BUILD RESILIENCE

Anticipate, mitigate and manage risks

Implement sustainable WASH services as early as possible

Use and strengthen

local markets and social enterprises to provide affordable WASH goods

Integrate WASH, Nutrition and Health strategies and programmes



WE CONNECT AND MOBILIZE

Build strategic partnerships

Strategically **link up** with other sectors

Use evidence to influence decision-makers on WASH

Support civil society and empower communities to influence socio-political change



WE CREATE & SHARE KNOWLEDGE

Identify, select, test the most promising innovative solutions

Build evidence via formal and operational research

Manage knowledge to support decision-making

Share and disseminate knowledge and data

Contribute to the professionalization of the sector





ENSURE LOCAL ACTORS ARE AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE RESPONSE

Communities and local actors have a decisive voice in WASH projects' needs assessments, planning, implementation, maintenance, operation, monitoring and evaluation, and are able to provide feedback and complaints. Response includes people of all ages, gender, abilities and backgrounds without discrimination.

INDICATORS

% of country offices designing, implementing and monitoring WASH services based on participation from communities and local actors, and provide feedback & complaint mechanisms that trigger corrective actions

5 INDICATIVE INTERVENTIONS

- In project assessments, collect data from affected communities using participatory methods (e.g. focus group discussions, semi-structured, narrative, and in-depth interviewing)
- Consult and share information with affected populations throughout the project, and adapt the project accordingly
- Support community-led self-help initiatives
- Implement feedback mechanisms
- Work with local organizations who can help to capture the voices of women and minorities, without putting them at risk



ADDRESS POWER INEQUITIES THROUGH GENDER-TRANSFORMATION

Gender-transformative approaches are applied in the planning, intervention, monitoring and evaluation of WASH programs.

INDICATORS

of country offices systematically using gender and power analyses in their programming

- Conduct gender and power analyses
- Train skilled male and female facilitators who can engage both men and women as equal partners in making decisions and in taking on WASH duties
- Enable women-led organizations (e.g. social enterprises, O&M groups, committees)
- Work with institutions that support stronger women's participation and engagement
- Make women, girls, men and boys champions of change



MAINSTREAM ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS IN PROGRAMS

- Action Against Hunger's 2020 Environmental Policy is mainstreamed in WASH projects to ultimately mitigate and reduce negative environmental impacts, including reducing offices' and programs' water footprint.
- An integrated approach to natural resource management is adopted to address triggering factors of crisis and impacts on other sectors (e.g. food production and livelihoods).
- WASH programs are adjusted in response to expected climatic stimuli.

INDICATORS

of country offices conducting the Nexus **Environmental Assessment** Tool (NEAT+) and implementing interventions accordingly

5 INDICATIVE INTERVENTIONS

- Conduct environmental risk assessments and design programs accordingly
- Respect local sanitary codes and national environmental legislation
- Mitigate the impact of WASH activities (e.g. reduced distances between sludge collection and discharge segments, planted filter treatment systems, solar energy, ...)
- Manage water resources (e.g. surface water retention, aquifer recharge, haffir dams, rainwater harvesting, sand dams and ponds)
- Manage water resources in agricultural use (e.g. multiple use of water, wastewater reuse, micro/drip irrigation, agroforestry)



STRENGTHEN WASH SYSTEMS¹

Country Offices assess gaps in WASH systems at different governance levels (municipal, district, national). They support duty bearers (government, service providers...) in filling these gaps by adopting WASH system strengthening trajectories.

INDICATORS

of projects including a WASH system strengthening component based on a governance assessment

- Deploy a simple, functional tool to assess WASH governance systems from the bot-
- Support capacity of decentralized government offices to plan, supervise and monitor service provision
- Contribute to strengthening the regulatory framework (e.g. tariff collection, service quality, environmental protection)
- Professionalize service delivery models
- Hold duty bearers accountable about gaps in WASH systems via advocacy activities and awareness-building among right-holders



WE SAVE LIVES AND RESPOND TO PEOPLE'S NEEDS



FOCUS WASH RESPONSES IN AREAS WITH HIGH PUBLIC HEALTH RISKS

WASH interventions are rapid and localized in areas with the most severe public health needs (e.g. based on severity classification, outbreaks, high burden of malnutrition) to ultimately improve public health.

INDICATORS

of country offices with WASH responses located in epidemic and/ or malnutrition hotspots identified via epidemiological data

5 INDICATIVE INTERVENTIONS

- Use geographical targeting based on multi-sectoral surveillance (e.g. epidemiological description of outbreak patterns, malnutrition hotspots, current or anticipated severe lack of basic services)
- Implement WASH'Nutrition integrated projects to reduce acute malnutrition
- Implement WASH Minimum package in health care facilities
- Conduct Case-area targeted interventions (CATI) for cholera outbreaks
- Contribute to multisectoral outbreak response (e.g. COVID-19)



BETTER UNDERSTAND SOCIAL NORMS AND VALUES TO TRIGGER CHANGE

WASH projects and promotion activities are based on a better understanding of social norms, determinants and barriers. Projects are shaped accordingly, leading to more effective programs, equity in gender roles, and improved health outcomes.

INDICATORS

of country offices basing their WASH projects and promotion activities on formative research and / or gender analysis

- Work in collaboration with social sciences specialists
- Train staff on assessing social norms and values
- Track disease perceptions within the community to tackle misconceptions
- Incorporate findings on social norms and values in programs
- Implement a Risk communication and community engagement (RCCE) strategy

STRENGTHEN WASH SURGE CAPACITY

Action Against Hunger's capacity to respond to crises increases proportionally to growing humanitarian needs. This includes enhancing organisational surge capacity, working in consortium with other organisations and agencies and improving local deployment capacity.

INDICATORS

% of responses initiating WASH activities locally (such as Rapid Response Mechanisms) within 72 hours of a declared emergency

5 INDICATIVE INTERVENTIONS

- Maintain stand-by local partnership
- Enhance and continuously update WASH emergency pool
- Implement Early Warning Early Action systems
- Lead or take part in Rapid Response Mechanisms
- Adopt accelerated procedures and tools for emergencies (e.g. SOPs, service providers framework agreements, procurement, resource allocation, emergency response fund)



MAINSTREAM MARKET-BASED RESPONSES

WASH market-based programming is systematically used wherever appropriate in order to offer dignity, flexibility and choice to affected populations.

INDICATORS

of country offices with WASH emergency responses using marketbased programming

5 INDICATIVE INTERVENTIONS

- Systematically conduct and update pre-crisis market assessments for WASH products and services
- Conduct ability and willingness-to-pay assessments for WASH products
- Train staff on market-based response, CASH & vouchers
- Purchase goods in the local market
- Integrate WASH products and services into the minimum expenditure basket



🔽 SUPPORT HUMANITARIAN COORDINATION

Action Against Hunger is an active contributor to key humanitarian WASH and cross-sectoral coordination platforms at the global and national levels, and supports local actors to participate in these coordination mechanisms as well.

INDICATORS

of country offices leading or co-leading national or subnational WASH coordination platforms

- Contribute to local humanitarian coordination (e.g. lead national or subnational cluster, submit to collective appeals, report data to cluster, contribute to national-level advocacy)
- Support the Global WASH Cluster and its working groups (e.g. SAGs, TWIGS, Field Support Team)
- Include coordination duties in relevant WASH staff job description
- Support logistically or financially a local actor to contribute to national WASH cluster meetings
- Actively take part in the WASH Humanitarian Roadmap



WE COLLECTIVELY BUILD RESILIENCE



ANTICIPATE, MITIGATE AND MANAGE RISKS

Action Against Hunger WASH teams, their partners and communities are capable of:

- Anticipating risks: They improve their analytical capability, are aware of potential risks and take action before a disaster happens.
- Mitigating risks: They take actions to minimise the impact of potential disasters by promoting local adaptive and mitigation WASH practices.
- Managing natural resources more sustainably and efficiently.

INDICATORS

% of emergency, preparedness and response plan taking into account WASH related-risks

5 INDICATIVE INTERVENTIONS

- Conduct vulnerability and multi-risk assessments and use disaster information management and sharing mechanisms (e.g. early warning systems and surveillance, community based surveillance, work with national hydrometeorology services)
- Make contingency plan (e.g. alternative emergency sewage discharge lines, Contingency WASH stocks, Framework agreements with the private sector and development actors)
- Implement climate-proof WASH services (e.g. dyke blocking flood water, raised well, protect well with hand-pump)
- Support non-structural activities with communities (e.g. disaster risk management training, know-how on building flood-resilient latrines)
- Implement Integrated Natural Resource Management programs (e.g. Land use planning, micro basin and watershed management through associations of municipalities, community water keyline design for Farm Water Management)



IMPLEMENT SUSTAINABLE WASH SERVICES AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE

Clear strategies are developed from the start to ensure continuity of services and implement sustainable WASH solutions. All water points built or rehabilitated by Action Against Hunger or by local partners are mapped on an online platform and monitored after completion. Source and reason for failure are documented.

INDICATORS

After handover, % of WASH services still operational after:

- 6 months in rapid onset emergencies
- 12 months in all other settings

- Design WASH infrastructure based on life cycle costs
- Use resilient, low-tech and/or self-sustaining technologies
- Geolocalize WASH infrastructure
- Conduct functionality surveys on online platform
- Perform regular preventive maintenance on water points

USE AND STRENGTHEN LOCAL MARKETS AND SOCIAL ENTERPRISES TO PROVIDE AFFORDABLE WASH GOODS

In intervention areas, Action Against Hunger uses and supports markets, as well as innovates and invests in social enterprises. WASH markets are more resilient to shocks and affected populations have access to a wider range of critical WASH goods and services.

INDICATORS

of WASH projects relying on Market Based Programming (MBP) modalities or supporting social enterprise

5 INDICATIVE INTERVENTIONS

- Build or strengthen social enterprises for WASH services (e.g. business planning, supply, marketing management capacity)
- Build tripartite partnerships between humanitarian actors, service providers and development actors
- Support the development of public-private partnerships
- Generate new demand via social marketing
- Help service providers adapt to crisis (e.g. bulk tanker filling stations, support for service providers to pay salaries to retain staff)



INTEGRATE WASH, NUTRITION AND HEALTH STRATEGIES AND **PROGRAMMES**

In intervention areas, WASH is integrated into health system strengthening policies and interventions, including budget allocations, infrastructure management and monitoring of IPC conditions in health and nutrition facilities.

INDICATORS

% of health and/or nutrition centers in intervention areas within which WASH services are meeting WASH minimum standards

- Support governments to align national WASH and Health and/or Nutrition frameworks, policies and strategies
- Mainstream the integration of Nutrition objectives in WASH frameworks and strategies from the outset.
- Include WASH-related indicators and standards in Nutrition and Health frameworks and strategies.
- Identify programmatic joint opportunities based on areas and temporality of common interest (e.g. the "Baby WASH" and the 1000-days window of opportunity)
- Mapping of existing WASH'Nutrition actors in the areas of intervention



3 WE CONNECT AND MOBILIZE



BUILD STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Relationships and partnerships with humanitarian and development actors (national governments, local service providers, CSOs, private sector and foundations where appropriate) at the global and national levels are strengthened. 100 % of country offices develop more sustainable and strategic partnerships with local actors with whom they define and share goals, budgets, decision-making and risks. They complement each other in terms of competences. Ultimately, actors' capacity to respond directly to emergencies and implement WASH interventions is increased. All partners are encouraged to take on the gender transformative agenda.

INDICATORS

% of country offices having at least one strategic partnership with a local partner (operational and/or academic) with whom risks, decision-making power and budget are shared.

5 INDICATIVE INTERVENTIONS

- Jointly assess the organisational capabilities of the country offices and local partner
- Public-Private-Partnerships
- Give access to training to partners
- Sensitize donors to give flexible and simplified funding directly to local organizations
- The work of local partners is explicitly acknowledged in reporting to donors and in all public communications



STRATEGICALLY LINK UP WITH OTHER SECTORS

The co-benefits of improved WASH services are highlighted to other sectors. WASH national, international and/or Sphere standards are known and implemented by other sectors (Health, Food Security and Livelihoods, Nutrition) Collaborations with other sectors (Mental Health and care practices, Food Security and Livelihood, Nutrition) become systematic.

INDICATORS

% of country offices' yearly strategy including integrated objectives between WASH and at least one other sector

- Conduct Multi-Sector Initial Rapid Assessment (Mira)
- Contribute to multi-sectoral rapid response mechanisms (RRM)
- Sign MoUs with non WASH institutions
- Identify joint programmatic opportunities (e.g. "1000-days window of opportunity", WASH and Health education in schools, Multi-Use Water Systems in Food Security, Food Safety & Hygiene sensitisation)
- Contribute to other sectors' events (e.g. Sun Global Gathering, National Nutrition day, One Health events)



USE EVIDENCE TO INFLUENCE DECISION-MAKERS ON WASH

Activities are conducted to reach Action Against Hunger's four main WASH advocacy objectives:

- Denounce attacks on WASH infrastructure in conflict situations
- Hold authorities accountable to their commitments on good water governance
- Push (inter)national actors to realize the universal access to drinking water and sanitation
- Get the international community to recognize the link between water and climate

At the global level, advocacy activities are conducted with other global actors. At the local level, WASH advocacy objectives are adapted to the local context, with people affected by the issue, and in consultation with the national humanitarian WASH coordination platform.

INDICATORS

% of country offices having multi-year WASH advocacy objectives and reporting on progress annually

5 INDICATIVE INTERVENTIONS

- Train staff in WASH Advocacy
- Provide technical assistance in the development of government's roadmaps, strategic plans, policies
- Hold bilateral meetings with decision makers (e.g. government representatives, donors, water committees)
- Hold social-media and media campaigns
- Contribute to the advocacy initiatives of the WASH humanitarian roadmap



SUPPORT CIVIL SOCIETY AND EMPOWER COMMUNITIES TO INFLUENCE SOCIO-POLITICAL CHANGE IN WASH

Civil society and communities are empowered to influence socio-political change and claim their rights to water and sanitation. Action Against Hunger promotes participatory governance and gives Civil Society Organisations access to spaces at local, regional and international levels where they can be heard directly. Proactive efforts are made to give a voice to minorities.

INDICATORS

of local CSOs and/or communities receiving support from Action Against Hunger in claiming their WASH rights and in influencing WASH decisionmakers

- Provide an advocacy and community mobilisation training to local actors
- Support the creation of a feedback mechanism between communities and service providers
- Facilitate meetings between local actors and decision makers
- Support youth and local actors active contribution at events
- Work with organizations who can help represent minorities



WE CREATE AND SHARE KNOWLEDGE



IDENTIFY, SELECT, TEST MOST PROMISING INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS

Action Against Hunger WASH teams and the international WASH community identify where innovations are most needed. Together, they develop and test new technologies and approaches to respond to evolving WASH challenges.

INDICATORS

of country offices developing and/or piloting innovation responding to current WASH challenges

5 INDICATIVE INTERVENTIONS

- Share information about local innovations with Technical Advisors
- Pilot innovations in the field (e.g. Community Perceptions Tracker, process evaluation Wash'Em...)
- Adaptat innovations in new settings
- Partner with private sector to evaluate innovative solutions
- Contribute to international WASH innovation initiatives such as Elrha Humanitarian Innovation Fund



BUILD EVIDENCE VIA FORMAL AND OPERATIONAL RESEARCH

Robust and scalable evidence on transformative WASH is generated. A pluri-annual WASH formal and operational research agenda is developed in line with country offices inputs and the global WASH community own research agenda.

INDICATORS

of country offices conducting research aligned with the pluriannual WASH research agenda

- Define a WASH research agenda
- Implement operational research projects led by country offices with back-stopping from WASH Technical Advisors and research staff
- Contribute to international WASH research initiatives (e.g. WASH roadmap initiative 1.5, Global WASH Cluster WASH Gap Analysis)
- Conduct actionable research (e.g. R4ACT) on WASH-related topics
- Partner with universities and research institutes



MANAGE INFORMATION TO SUPPORT DECISION-MAKING

A WASH knowledge management framework is developed to help identify, collect, distill, analyze and manage the vast corpus of information needed for efficient and fast decision-making for WASH programs in complex settings.

INDICATORS

of WASH staff using Action Against Hunger knowledge platform

5 INDICATIVE INTERVENTIONS

- · Identify and collect key data
- Organise and store data and knowledge digitally (e.g. Action Against Hunger websites, online library, WASH community)
- Use data visualization
- Attribute knowledge management responsibilities to WASH staff (e.g. Handover report, share experience on WASH community)
- · Invest in individual, organizational and systems capacity to use evidence



SHARE AND DISSEMINATE KNOWLEDGE AND DATA EXTERNALLY

Key WASH resources and data are shared internally (on WASH community and the knowledge hub) and externally (website, cluster...) including with other sectors. The shared knowledge and data contribute to the monitoring of progress towards the SDGs and support decision-making.

INDICATORS

of technical publication authored or co-authored by Action Against Hunger shared with the international community

5 INDICATIVE INTERVENTIONS

- Develop plan to disseminate new resources with communication and advocacy teams
- Share WASH and epidemiologic data with national clusters
- Share water data with water resources management data platforms
- · Promote key Action Against Hunger WASH resources and research publications (e.g. webinars, international events, university seminars)
- Share data on progress towards SDG 6 with national tracking system



CONTRIBUTE TO THE PROFESSIONALIZATION OF THE SECTOR

Professional development and training opportunities are provided to Action Against Hunger WASH teams and to local actors to ultimately fill the WASH sector Human Resources capacity gap.

INDICATORS

Total # of staff and partners who completed a WASHrelated course dispensed by Action Against Hunger

- Provide WASH initial and continuous training which are designed to increase knowledge retention (e.g. eLearning, micro-learning, regularly-updated content)
- Dedicate time for WASH staff to follow training
- Elaborate capacity building plan
- Contribute to the competency framework for professionals initiative of the WASH humanitarian Roadmap, specifically on WASH'Nut integration
- Build capacity of local learning institutes (e.g. 2ie, Alcala, Amman WASH programs)



FOR FOOD.

AGAINST HUNGER

AND MALNUTRITION.

FOR CLEAN WATER.

AGAINST KILLER DISEASES.

FOR CHILDREN THAT GROW

UP STRONG.

AGAINST LIVES CUT SHORT.

FOR CROPS THIS YEAR,

AND NEXT.

AGAINST DROUGHT

AND DISASTER.

FOR CHANGING MINDS.

AGAINST IGNORANCE AND

INDIFFERENCE.

FOR FREEDOM FROM HUNGER.

FOR EVERYONE.

FOR GOOD.

FOR ACTION.

AGAINST HUNGER.