

TERMS OF REFERENCE

FOR THE REVIEW OF

STAR ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT

Background information

The context under which the STAR approach was developed is one where the population most vulnerable to HIV/AIDS has least access to education, and with shamefully limited funding available at present for education programmes in Africa targeted at young people or adults. On the other-hand, there is clear evidence that education saves lives (as documented in the EFA Monitoring Report 2003/4). No approach to poverty eradication can be effective if it ignores the reality that this is a continent living with HIV/AIDS and yet there have been few integrated, cross-sectoral responses.

With its grounded reputation for work in education and HIV/AIDS, ActionAid committed to linking across these two sectors through initiatives such as Education Positive (a book of testimonies), and The Sound of Silence (research on the failure to deliver HIV education). STAR fits within this wider context and builds on two innovative approaches in which ActionAid has played a significant role: Reflect and Stepping Stones. These two approaches were thoroughly tried and tested with great success in their own spheres – and in the context of the HIV/AIDS epidemic it now merged them into the STAR innovation.

Comic Relief has actively supported both Reflect and Stepping Stones in many African countries over recent years and now plays yet a central role in this strategic step in the evolution of these approaches. With the financial support of Comic Relief in creating STAR we are breaking conventional sectoral boundaries and we have full confidence that this initiative triggers-off empowerment of communities vulnerable and also those in the face of HIV/AIDS.

Rationale for the review

PAMOJA and ActionAid International plans to undertake a review of the STAR Action Research project, with a particular focus on how the STAR approach has been piloted and how the target communities have responded to the approach. To that effect, this review is required to help define the mid term achievements, challenges, and opportunities. This exercise also aims at having an independent structured analysis of the results of the action research in the three piloting countries highlighting **relevance, impact, effectiveness, efficiency, limitations**



and, if appropriate, sustainability of the STAR approach and the way(s) these results have been achieved.

Drawing on existing materials and information, the ultimate purpose of the review is to provide comprehensive and systematic description of **trends** and **learnings** about how STAR makes or could make a difference to the lives of people vulnerable to HIV/AIDS in Africa.

Issues to be studied in the review

Given the fact that it isn't practicable to assessing everything at-a-go, this review makes strategic choices about what warrants in-depth study and the **questions** to be answered include;

<p>Relevance</p> <p>Is the project valid and pertinent?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the HIV/AIDS concerns, problems and priorities at the local / national levels the ones addressed by STAR • To what extent are the intended target groups the actual beneficiaries of the project • Are there groups among the intended target communities that the project has failed to reach and why
<p>Performance</p> <p>What progress is being made by the project relative to its objectives?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the project's effectiveness and its estimated cost-effectiveness • What are the responsible issues for the effectiveness or lack of it and how • How efficient is STAR approach in empowering communities vulnerable to HIV/AIDS • How would you describe the appropriateness and timelines of inputs and support to the project • Are there wider political, economic, and social changes which have affected the project • Which project objectives have been most successfully achieved and which objectives have been least successfully achieved and why • What are the facilitators/barriers that enable/limit the performance • How have the support activities provided by PAMOJA & ActionAid international related to projects performance
<p>Success</p> <p>What and how has the project brought about change?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What impact/outcomes has the project had in the target communities or how has the work changed the lives of the target communities. Are there other changes that have occurred which were not envisaged at the beginning of the project • Describe how the project has been used to influence changes in HIV related policy or practice, within the local and national settings. • How are PLWA, youth, students, women, disabled people, ethnic groups and other distinct groups participating in and benefiting from the project. Does the general well-being among specific groups; PLWA, orphans, women, etc. change as a function of project involvement
<p>Others</p> <p>What is the way forward?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are the specific opportunities for this project 2. How differently should the experiences and lessons from this project be captured and rightfully used 3. What particular issues should inform next year's project management and planning 4. Should there be significant changes in the way in which the project is planned, managed and implemented

Intended user(s) and use(s)

The process is designed and carried out around the needs of the primary intended users namely; the implementing partners, PAMOJA, ActionAid International, and the communities. These intended users have varied responsibility because of their engagement in the review process or with the review findings (e.g., make decisions, change strategies, take action, change practices, etc.)

There are three main uses of the review findings and these are highlighted below;

<u>Uses</u>	<u>Detail</u>
<u>Judge relevance or worth</u>	Accountability to the beneficiaries and the donor agency Ensure Cost-benefit decisions Decide a programmes future Accreditation of approach
<u>Improve project performance / implementation</u>	Ensure continuous improvement Quality enhancement Ensure more effective management
<u>Generate knowledge</u>	Building a reflection and learning culture Extrapolate principles about what works on STAR approach Linking theory to practice of the realities of HIV/AIDS in Africa Synthesize patterns across varied contexts of piloting STAR Form basis for policy making and influencing

Principles and approach

This review process will adhere to the following set of principles so as to ensure genuine and reliable results useful for any future project development and particularly when the aim is to change and empower communities to take action;

1. **Transparency** of the review process is crucial to its credibility and legitimacy. The review process must be as open as possible with the results made widely available
2. **Feedback** to both decision makers, operational staff and the general public is essential
3. Systematic **dissemination** is essential for ensuring improved planning and implementation of further activities
4. **Respect** for the rights and dignity of all **stakeholders** (persons and institutions including persons living with HIV/AIDS and those at risk of being infected with HIV/AIDS). It acknowledges the right of all parties to be **listened to** and to set out their arguments within the framework of the review
5. **Fair communication** where all parties strive to understand each other, to make themselves understood and to avoid giving in to prejudice and presumption
6. Selected of methods according to their feasibility and in view of the relevance of possible results. **Quantitative and qualitative approaches** are made to complement each other usefully.

7. Primary stakeholders are **active participants** – not just sources of information
8. In addition, the evaluators will maintain participant **confidentiality** and minimize duplication with other similar processes.
9. Given the international nature of the project, local / regional issues, realities and influences on **gender and cultural** should be respected and considered as crosscutting aspects.

Overall the methods of investigation should be consistent with answering the evaluation questions, the intended users/uses, the principles and approaches as well as the budget and timeline for the review.

Methodology:

In the STAR action research project, care and emphasis is put on completeness, and correctness, of the results. This review exercise will be conducted at three country level phases that will be done concurrently. Each country pilot project will conduct the review independently thereafter all findings forwarded to PAMOJA for synthesis and write-up one review report for the entire project.

The review shall adopt a simple, participatory process combining conventional evaluation techniques and participatory methodologies which will be capable of detecting short-term changes in the lives of communities as well as trends in services and policy work that relates to HIV/AIDS.

The review team(s) shall review literature to form basis and to support the process of deriving meaning from the rest of the review undertakings. The other review tools shall include (but not limited to):

1	Community focus groups	11	Reflection / dialogue groups
2	Discussion groups	12	Quantitative data sheets
3	Individual, directed interviews	13	Comparative picture analysis
4	Field / homes visits	14	Flow diagrams
5	Photographic theme analysis		
6	Review STAR group materials		
7	Personal testimonies		
8	Case studies		
9	Directed observation		
10	STAR project time trend		

The teams shall use random sampling to in the entire exercise but guided by the following data sources: STAR groups, STAR member families, HIV/AIDS service providers, STAR piloting agencies, ActionAid international, other closely linked development agencies, Local leaders, etc.

Roles and responsibilities

To avoid substantive, administration and communication problems among those involved in the review process, the following consideration of who will do what and whose responsibility it is to coordinate which task have been outlined:

STAR groups (communities & facilitators): participate in information generation and assessing project's progress, providing crucial information and access to pointers of progress or lack of it and finally will facilitate use of the review findings.

ActionAid International & Partner Agencies: Manage the contract / review process and serve as a liaison with the review team(s). This shall also include logistical arrangements and providing information and access to documents. Finally the partnership shall approve the final products and facilitate use of the results.

Review Team(s): Collect and analyze data, write the report, present / disseminate country level findings to the various levels; community, piloting agency and ActionAid international.

PAMOJA Africa: Support coordination and management of the process providing technical expertise/guidance to the review teams to ensure quality work and output. This shall involve reviewing draft reports and giving inputs for reporting. Finally synthesize country review reports into one project report submitted to ActionAid UK and also share the report with other interested agencies in Africa.

Reporting requirements

After the initial review of these TOR, the review teams are asked to provide a written inception report of maximum 4 pages concerning what they see as the main directions of this review process and how they intend to handle the task. This report will be discussed at a meeting with ActionAid International country programme level and partner agencies' staff, who will then be able to approve the suitable team(s) and provide feedback on their suggestions.

For the final report, the review team(s) is asked to synthesize their findings in a report with a maximum length of 20 pages (including appendixes) and a minimum of 15 pages (excluding appendixes). The report should contain conclusions and recommendations at both strategy and operational levels. Format and outline of the report shall follow the guidelines provided here below:

1. Executive summary

This is a critical opening to the report. It should provide: an overview of the evaluation (the 'what' and 'why') the major sources of data and methods of data collection and analysis, general results of the evaluation, summary of recommendations any major limitations or constraints placed on the evaluation.

This section should provide all the key information should be kept as brief as possible (A single A4 page) and free of as much technical terms or jargon as possible.

2. Background of project

This shall cover: origins of the project (e.g. in response to the perceived needs), project goals and objectives, resources involved, funding sources, and planned project 'deliverables' (1/2 A4 page)

3. Purpose, intent and design of the evaluation study

Items here shall include: aims/objectives of the review, review criteria chosen (performance measures, standards) key questions explored, other design parameters — data collection and analysis methods, data sources, staff involved.

4. Review Results

This section should provide a description of the evaluation findings. Using graphs, tables, photographs, diagrams etc. to aid understanding and interpretation.

5. Discussion

This should include: interpretations of the findings in the light of project and the review purpose any limitations or weaknesses in the findings, methods, data, etc. (i.e. validity issues), judgments against the review criteria, comments on any 'unexpected' findings.

6. Costs and benefits

Though difficult to adequately identify and quantify, attempts should be made to probably include analysis of costs and benefits. It would include: description of costs and benefits estimation - dollar and non-dollar costs and benefits.

7. Conclusions, recommendations and options

As important as the opening Executive summary, this section should encapsulate the outcomes of the evaluation and clearly point to appropriate actions that stem from the findings. It should include: overall judgments of the worth of the project, comment on the validity and reliability of the findings on which the judgments are made, any recommendations for change/improvement in inputs, process, outcomes, or application of the innovation, any adjustments required in the innovation be replicated (lessons to be learned).

The evaluation report must be presented in a way that enables publication without further editing. A draft of the report should be delivered to ActionAid International on the agreed dates for comments. After receiving comments, the review team(s) will make the necessary revisions and hand in a final version of the report within one week. It is the responsibility of the review team(s) that the report is written in correct and comprehensible language, and submitted in hard and electronic copy to ActionAid International which is a condition for its approval. Note that the final report will be judged by ActionAid and partner

agencies to suit internationally recognized standards: utility, feasibility, accuracy, and propriety

Furthermore, after the completion of the final report the review team(s) should actively participate in a possible meeting at ActionAid presenting the main findings and conclusions of the report.

Estimation of the cost

An evaluation budget should include the costs of:

1. Personnel (e.g. review team per diems)
2. Travel (transportation)
3. Supplies, equipment and materials
4. Direct communication costs such as phone, fax, email
5. Copying and printing
6. Meetings (data collection, findings verification, feedback, etc.)

Review milestones

Activity	Days allocated
Planning	1 days
Data collection	4 days
Data analysis & draft reporting	4 days
Presentation of report	1 day
Finalizing report	2 days
Sharing and feedback	Ongoing
Total days	12 days

Annex 1: Indicators against which pilot projects are monitored & evaluated

- The extent to which women and girls are able to voice their concerns and make decisions affecting their lives (and evidence of impact on gender relations),
- Whether people are able to access and use information and services on HIV/AIDS (and how this impacts on behaviour).
- The extent to which literacy and other communication skills of vulnerable people are strengthened (and how these skills are used / to what ends).
- The extent to which people can engage constructively in the design and implementation of local/national policies (or influence the practices of different agencies)
- The level of reduction in incidences of prejudice and discrimination, despair and stigma around HIV/AIDS.
- The extent to which communities are providing care and support for local people living with / affected by HIV/AIDS.
- The extent to which organisations of positive people are built or strengthened (and how other organisations are influenced).
- The extent to which other outcomes occur (especially those that have been identified by past Reflect or Stepping Stones practice eg changes in school enrolment, wider health practices, productivity, income generation, participation, social behaviours, relations with external agencies etc).

Note; these are generic indicators and each pilot project has locally developed indicators derived from these. A combination of the two should be used for this review.

Annex 2: Diverse contexts against which relative effectiveness of STAR is tracked

- in area of low or high incidence of HIV/AIDS;
- in areas of low or high awareness of HIV/AIDS;
- in urban / rural contexts;
- in different social / cultural / religious contexts;
- in programmes run by different types of organisation;
- in organisations already experienced with Reflect or Stepping Stones (or not); etc