

Talking

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action



SPRING 2018

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Thanks to your support

Women like Romida have been empowered as community leaders in the Rohingya refugee camps. Leaders like her are ensuring the voices of women are being heard in the ongoing response to the Rohingya crisis.

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Thank you for standing with women around the world



Michelle Higelin
Executive Director

I have been moved by the incredible solidarity women have built around the world this past year.

Thanks to the support of passionate people like you, we're seeing women take action and standing against adversity all over the world. They are becoming agents of change in their communities and they are a force to be reckoned with.

In Bangladesh, Rohingya women are mobilising to ensure their voices are heard in the response to the ongoing refugee crisis. ActionAid's Women Friendly Spaces are creating a place for women to learn about their rights and receive essential support to deal with the atrocities they have experienced.

In South Africa, women are coming together to investigate the impacts of an Australian-run coal mine just 10 km from their community. With the support of ActionAid, women are working together to understand the impacts of mining on their rights and livelihoods, and collectively creating an alternative vision for their community.

In countries like Uganda, Nigeria, Kenya and Rwanda, women are at the forefront of a land rights movement. In 2016, women from around the world came together to climb Mt. Kilimanjaro to demand equal land rights for African women. They are continuing to fight for their rights, and are on the brink of a major breakthrough after assembling a charter of demands to present to community leaders.

And with the rise of the #MeToo movement and women standing up against sexual harassment, assault and gender inequality, we've seen important conversations erupt all over the world. Women are calling for justice and demanding equality.

With your support, we're mobilising women-led responses to emergencies, creating spaces for women to learn about their rights, and empowering them to fight against poverty and injustice. Their voices are being heard and their efforts are creating powerful change in communities around the world.

I hope these pages inspire you to continue standing in solidarity with women fighting against injustices and claiming their rights.

Thank you again for your ongoing commitment to women's rights and gender equality.

In solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michelle Higelin'.

Michelle Higelin
Executive Director
ActionAid Australia

► **Women farmers who took part in the Securing Food Rights Project in Uganda.**



An update from the Rohingya refugee camps

Thanks to you, we're supporting women and girls to ensure their voices are being heard.



▲ ActionAid women-led committee members working together to prevent and create awareness of sanitary and health issues at Mainerghona camp, Bangladesh.

I was heartened to see thousands of ActionAid Australia supporters give generously to our end of financial year appeal to help women affected by the Rohingya refugee crisis in Bangladesh. I wanted to update you on what has been happening in the camps and how your support is helping women affected to respond to the ongoing crisis.

Together you have helped contribute over \$250,000 towards ActionAid's vital work, your support has proved to be crucial. In late June, heavy monsoon rains began to fall on the Cox's Bazar refugee camps, presenting huge challenges for the hundreds of thousands of people living in there, many of whom are women and children.

In addition to much-needed donations, we received hundreds of messages of solidarity from you to Rohingya women. These messages of solidarity are currently on their way to Bangladesh where they will be delivered to women living in the camps. See some of the beautiful messages on the following page.

Thanks to your support, ActionAid and local partners have been able to reach over 65,000 Rohingya refugees with our emergency response. ActionAid has also been

supporting women-led committees to ensure the specific needs of women are being met and their voices heard in the response to this crisis.

Despite this, there is still so much to be done. The monsoon season has wreaked havoc on the camps, destroying homes and endangering lives. Women and girls continue to bear the brunt, facing high risks of gender-based violence, trafficking and early marriage.

Though there are many challenges, we remain determined to make sure women have access to the vital support they need to take charge of their lives.

I cannot thank you enough for supporting our work in making sure the voices of women are heard in Cox's Bazar.

In solidarity,

Holly Miller

Head of Global Engagement
ActionAid Australia

Your kind messages of support for Rohingya women

Add your voice

Support to the Rohingya women who are facing this crisis.

I LIVE FAR AWAY, BUT I HAVE HEARD ABOUT THE TERRIBLE THINGS THAT HAVE HAPPENED TO YOUR PEOPLE. ACTION AID WILL HELP YOU TO BE A LEADER AND HEAL YOURSELF AND OTHER WOMEN & GIRLS. I SEND MY SUPPORT IN SPIRIT. ANNE

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Add your voice

Support to the Rohingya women who are facing this crisis.

I ADMIRE YOUR STRENGTH and COURAGE, I PRAY FOR THE SPEEDY ARRIVAL of the GOOD TIMES. YOUR PATIENCE and LOVE will BE REWARDED. GOD BLESS.

actionaid



Thanks to your support, ActionAid has:



Set up **six Women Friendly Spaces** and **16 community watch groups** to ensure safe access to essential services for women in the camps.



Worked closely with **women-led committees** in the camps to provide safe drinking water, food, blankets, dignity kits, alternative cooking fuel and access to washrooms for more than **65,000 refugees**.



Installed **60 toilets and 30 bathing spaces** around the camps, and ensured there are designated areas for women and girls.

The Strong Women Challenge is back for 2018!



Will you stand in solidarity with strong women around the world?

We're excited to launch the 2018 Strong Women Challenge this November and we want you to be part of it!

Last year, the ActionAid Australia community raised almost \$40,000 to support strong women around the world in their fight for equality and justice. This year, we're determined to have an even bigger impact.

What is the Strong Women Challenge?

The Strong Women Challenge is a commitment to strong women around the world. It is a 21 day strength-building challenge that will make you fitter, faster and stronger. You will be provided with daily challenges to suit your fitness and ability level, while your friends and family sponsor you to complete the challenge in support of strong women on the frontline of humanitarian emergencies.

To ensure that anyone can participate, we've built a challenge for all fitness levels. Whether you're young or mature, a gym junkie or a gym flunkie, or you just want to participate for fun, we've got a fitness challenge suited to you.

Throughout the 21 days, your fitness challenge will be delivered direct to your inbox each day. You will go on a transformative experience where you'll hear from strong women around the world as they fight inequality and injustice.

Be part of a community making a real difference. Strong for you, strong for her.



© Kate Holt/ActionAid

▲ Sukiwa is a widowed mother of 14, she carries wood for a living in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Hear from last year's participants



Alison Langmead

"The Strong Women Challenge was what I needed to commit to some fitness challenge on a daily basis to strengthen my ageing body. I was delighted to experience a real surge in my sense of wellbeing with this happy combination of exercise and the greater strength and fitness it gave me to be able to raise funds for my sisters around the world."

Karen Bishton

"I got involved with the 2017 Strong Woman Challenge as a way to support my niece who had signed up. As a working mother of five children I know what it takes to run a family in this very privileged country. Yet so many other women on this planet do the same with so little. This was just my small part in this very big picture."



To register go to www.strongwomenchallenge.org.au.
For more information, please call our Donor Care Coordinator
Monique, on **1300 66 66 72** or email monique.corkin@actionaid.org.

We can't wait to get strong with you!

Around the movement

ActionAid Australia is a women's rights organisation and part of a global Federation working across 45 countries to support women to create change. We wanted to share some of the incredible work happening around the movement, thanks to supporters like you.



▲ Jane and other members of her Mother's Club on the farm they cultivated together.

SIERRA LEONE

“The potatoes can yield a lot of benefits, so we plant more.” – Jane

In 2014, there was a widespread Ebola outbreak in West Africa. The effects were catastrophic, with nearly 25,000 cases of Ebola reported in the region.

Rural families were directly impacted by the outbreak, with farming activities coming to a standstill and causing many communities to run out of food.

In the aftermath, the Government of Sierra Leone focused its attention on rebuilding the economy and the livelihoods of communities affected. To support this initiative, ActionAid Sierra Leone set up a Mother's Club to support women directly.

In the village of Blamawo, the Mother's Club planted potato seeds and were extremely successful due to a high demand in their community. The venture supported them to become self-sufficient and be able to support their families.

“We can now have loans if we have urgent things to settle, for instance, paying of our children's fees or hospital bill,” said Jane, a member of the Blamawo Mother's Club.

Together, the women are flourishing. They are now undertaking training on livestock maintenance to help them continue to take charge of their lives in the wake of the Ebola crisis.



▲ Luchie, a member of PPKK, demonstrating one of the duties of the group: recording cases in the log book.

THE PHILIPPINES

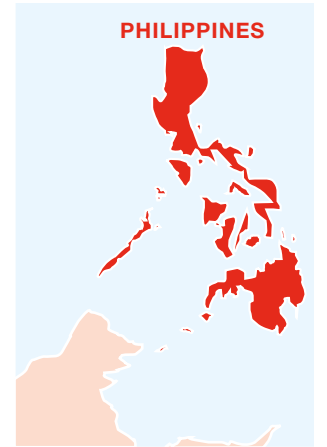
“I can finally say that I can stand on my own.”

– Luchie

Luchie is a member of National Rural Women Coalition (PKKK), which is made up of small farmers, fishers, indigenous people and workers in the Philippines. ActionAid Australia has been partnering with PPKK to ensure that women's rights are protected during emergencies like Typhoon Haiyan, which hit the Philippines in 2013.

The Philippines is at high risk of disaster, which disproportionately affects women due to existing gender inequalities. This results in an increased risk of violence, and a higher burden of unpaid care.

With the support of the Australian Government under the Australian NGO Cooperation Program and our generous supporters, ActionAid Australia and PPKK have established a Women's Emergency Network and trained 30 rural women's organisations in protection



and resilience during disasters. This vital training has strengthened the collective leadership and resilience of women like Luchie in humanitarian responses.



▲ Women in Trinidad Island where PPKK has distributed fishing nets to support women.

The humanitarian revolution has begun

In June, ActionAid Australia launched Arise - the first global fund directly supporting women-led emergency response with a long-term, transformative agenda.

In June, ActionAid Australia launched Arise - the first global fund directly supporting women-led emergency response with a long-term, transformative agenda.

We kicked off with events in Sydney and Melbourne with over 100 people coming along to hear more about Arise and ActionAid's work supporting women on the frontlines of disaster. Korto Williams, Head of Women's Rights at ActionAid International, spoke about her experiences in Liberia during the Ebola crisis.



▲ Korto Williams, Head of Women's Rights, ActionAid International; Michelle Higelin, Executive Director ActionAid Australia; Maeva Freeman, Senior Manager – Arise, and Flora Vano, Administrative Support Officer ActionAid Vanuatu at the Sydney launch.

Over the next five years, the Arise fund aims to empower one million women with the resources and networks they need to lead their communities in times of crisis.

Learn how you can get involved with Arise by visiting: arisefund.com

A special thank you to Versent and Hall & Wilcox for hosting the events at their offices.

ActionAid Australia annual assembly

ActionAid Australia hosted its annual assembly in early June. We brought community activists, partner organisations, international guests, board members and staff coming together in Sydney to discuss our strategy for the next year.

The assembly provides a forum for our community to get more involved in our work. It was a packed agenda, with attendees gathering to participate in round-table discussions, Q&A's, and brainstorming sessions on how we can better respond to issues affecting women around the globe.



▲ Attendees gather at the assembly to stand in solidarity with women fighting for equality and justice around the world.

It was an inspiring day, with lots of people from varied and diverse backgrounds coming together to work towards empowering women to claim their rights.

Women stand up to mining companies

Women investigate the impacts of fossil fuel companies in South Africa.



▲ Yvonne Sampear demanding accountability from fossil fuel companies in South Africa.

Australian fossil fuel companies are directly impacting communities in low income countries around the world. Though they promise economic development for local communities, the reality is often very different, with communities facing negative impacts, such as increases in gender-based violence, HIV infection rates, and unpaid labour, of which local women bear the brunt.

That's why women directly impacted by Australia's fossil fuel industry in countries like South Africa are taking action to hold these companies to account. Thanks to supporters like you, they're one step closer to justice.

We've been working with women like Yvonne Sampear and the Greater Phola Ogies Women's Forum in South Africa, to hold an Australian mining company accountable for violating women's rights and livelihoods in their community.

Thanks to passionate supporters like you, we raised over \$9,000 in June so that the women of Phola can investigate the Australian-run coal mine set up just 10 km from their homes. Local women will be mobilised and trained to investigate whether the Australian mining company is keeping the commitments it's made to the community. These brave women will then be supported to share their findings with key stakeholders.

The Phola community is just one of many affected by the operations of Australian fossil fuel companies overseas. A new report launched by ActionAid Australia in August has exposed the extent of Australia's fossil fuel footprint globally. The report revealed that 35 coal, oil and gas projects are currently operating in low income countries with at least another 115 planned.

This potential fourfold increase will put women's rights even more at risk. In addition, the industry also contributes to climate change, which is driving an increase in disasters that disproportionately impact women.

With the findings of the report now public, we will continue to put pressure on the Government to introduce the policies needed to regulate Australian fossil fuel companies operating overseas. It is critical that we continue to stand in solidarity with courageous women like Yvonne who are on the frontlines of fossil fuel extraction.

To read the full report, explore our interactive fossil fuel tracker and learn how you can take action go to: actionaid.nationbuilder.com/fossil_fuel_map



Calling for a human rights watchdog

ActionAid Australia heads to Canberra to demand a human rights watchdog

In June, ActionAid Australia activists and staff gathered in Canberra to call on the Government to establish a human rights watchdog to ensure access to justice for women affected by Australian mining companies operating overseas.

We held a morning tea for politicians on the lawns of Parliament House with a pack of real-life 'watchdogs' who were happy to woof for women's rights!

A human rights watchdog, like the one in Canada, would investigate complaints about the conduct of Australian mining companies operating in low income countries. We know from the extensive research we've done, and from speaking to women like Francina Nkosi, that women's rights are at risk as a result of these operations.

Francina is from Lephalale in South Africa. For many years, she has been campaigning to hold an Australian company that is trying to build a coal mine in her community to account. Together with other women from her community, Francina has gathered evidence of human rights violations associated with the proposed mine, such as blocking off a local cemetery from grieving families and insufficient community consultation.

We know that there are many stories like Francina's, and that the Australian mining industry has one of the largest fossil fuel footprints in the world, and the largest in Africa. An effective human rights watchdog would ensure access to justice for women like Francina and their communities, if their rights are violated by Australian companies.

Thanks to supporters like you, we were able to hand-deliver 4,066 petition signatures demanding a human rights watchdog to politicians in Canberra, and put this important issue on their agenda.

Momentum is building, with the United Nations recently endorsing the need for an independent human rights watchdog in Australia. This was a critical step towards ensuring the accountability of mining corporations - but we need to keep the pressure on.

Together we're making sure that the voices of women most affected by these fossil fuel companies are being heard by decision-makers in Australia.



▲ ActionAid watchdog and community activist Freya demanding action from the Australian Government.



▲ Activists meeting with politicians in Canberra.



Mary celebrates at the base of Mt. Kilimanjaro in 2016 with hundreds of women who have come to welcome her and her fellow climbers as they arrive.

© Georgina Goodwin/ActionAid

Help women in Kenya demand land rights

For women in Kenya, losing your husband can be one of the worst things that can happen to you. Not only does it mean the loss of a loved one but, as a woman, it can also mean that you are at risk of losing your land and your livelihood.

I've recently returned from spending a few weeks in the Great Lakes Region of Africa where I had the honour of meeting women that are, not only experiencing this injustice but, fighting to claim their rights.

Men and women do not have equal rights to land in many African countries. Patriarchal laws and practices mean that women do not have access to the same rights as men. This further entrenches inequality and keeps women from achieving equality and justice.

For women like Mary Adera Litewo from Kenya, this is a daily worry. She fears for the future of her children: "I have problems to do with boundaries on my land with my brothers-in-law. This started immediately after the death of my

husband. I feel very bad because I fear that if I die, my children will not get any inheritance from their father."

In 2016, Mary joined 300 women farmers at the base of Mt. Kilimanjaro to demand that their governments take action to uphold their rights to land ownership. This was an amazing feat of solidarity. Mary and 27 other women trekked to the top of the mountain to raise awareness of this injustice, and stand in solidarity with their sisters across the continent.

Since then, women have continued to fight for land rights. In partnership with ActionAid, they have compiled a charter with a list of demands to present to community leaders, in order to give them equal rights to land.

Last June, ActionAid, our partners and women from across Kenya organised an event in the capital, Nairobi. In attendance were ambassadors, government officials, and community members.

At the event, women read out their list of demands for equality and shared a pathway on how to get there. It was a powerful moment, with women from different ethnicities and religious backgrounds coming together for one common purpose: to gain equal land rights.

Women like Mary are determined to make their voices heard, and ensure they can secure rights for future generations.

"So if I meet my governor that is what I will tell him...give us our land back. And I will be happy. It is my land, it is our land and I don't want anything else" said Mary.

Now is a pivotal time for women in Kenya, which is why I am asking for your support. Your donation will go a long way to making sure that women no longer live in fear of their land being snatched away if their husbands die.

I know from speaking to women like Mary that land rights is about more than just ownership. It is about their livelihoods, and securing a future for all women in Kenya.

Your support can help women like Mary learn about their rights and access the crucial legal and community support to achieve them.

Please stand with women like Mary in Kenya to claim their land rights today.

Yours in solidarity,

Dr. Sally Henderson

Programme Manager
ActionAid Australia

Your gift can help:



Empower women through training groups where they can learn about their rights and access the legal and community support they need to claim them;



Set up meetings between women and decision makers to ensure their right to equal land ownership is on the agenda;



Support women to lobby for policy changes on land rights across Africa.



▲ Women gather at the base of Mt. Kilimanjaro to demand land rights from their governments.



Thank you

**for empowering women and
girls to claim their rights
and fight injustice.**

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