

Talking action

AUTUMN 2015



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Awakening the power of women farmers in Kenya

Support for Ebola and Philippines typhoon emergencies

3 million girls at risk of female genital mutilation

Kasua was accused of witchcraft and forced to live in a witch camp.

THANKS TO YOUR SUPPORT the Bonyase Camp was shut down and 55 alleged witches were reunited with their community.



Photo: ActionAid

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▲ “We finally have water!” says 9 year old Ruth, who is a sponsored child in Uganda. The community now benefit from the newly constructed water borehole that is the only source of fresh water for the community.

**Thank you for your valued support.
You are empowering lives!**

Because an end to poverty and injustice will be possible only when there is equality and rights for women and girls.

I wanted to say thank you.

Thanks to your passion and support, the past year was one of hope and change for women in low income countries.

In this issue of the newsletter, I want to show you just how your support is making a difference.



Because of you, displaced communities affected by Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines received urgent lifesaving assistance, livelihood training and support to rebuild their lives over the longer term.

Because of you, families whose homes were destroyed by the conflict in Gaza received urgently needed supplies and ongoing support for rehabilitation.

Because of you, communities in Liberia and Sierra Leone facing the threat of Ebola received protective gear and information on preventing the spread of this dreadful epidemic.

Because of you, women in low income countries struggling to make ends meet received vital agriculture training and equipment. This helped them to start growing crops to supplement their families' incomes.

The disbandment of the Bonyase witch camp in Ghana is another small victory at a time when women are being subjected to horrific violence and being cast out from their villages. Your gift helped create massive public awareness programs in rural communities where this belief was widespread, slowly changing old attitudes and beliefs.

These are just some of the ways in which your support is helping to fight poverty.

Here in Australia, there are many efforts underway through campaigns and advocacy

work to address the structural causes of poverty, while we hold government and corporates to account. For example highlighting immoral taxation practices used by corporates to avoid paying tax, was an issue ActionAid highlighted at the Brisbane G20 summit of world leaders.

As you may already know, the Federal Government has cut Australia's international aid budget for the next financial year by \$1 billion. The ActionAid Australia team has been hard at work to ensure that these cuts don't impact the communities who urgently need support.

Thanks to you, ActionAid is committed to working in solidarity with the most powerless and excluded people in the world to overcome the barriers presented by grinding poverty.

As you read through this newsletter, I hope that you can see just how incredibly important your past support has been, and the ways in which your gift is changing the lives of women, their families and their communities.

I am truly grateful for your support.

Warm regards

Archie Law
Executive Director



Your support helped Rosalia rebuild her life after the Philippines Typhoon. Her urban container garden is able to supplement her family's income.

Photo: ActionAid

Livelihood support for

41,479 people.



Disaster resilient housing for

6,853 people.



Trauma counselling for

276 women and children.



Rebuilding lives



Philippines typhoon emergency relief

In November 2013, Typhoon Haiyan was one of the strongest tropical cyclones ever recorded, devastating portions of Southeast Asia. 6000 people lost their lives, leaving 1.9 million homeless and more than 6 million displaced.

Because of your support:

- Water, food, clothing and immediate support was provided to displaced communities.
- ActionAid partnered with local groups to initiate rehabilitation and reconstruction activities.
- Women were supported to form community groups and a seed bank was established to help them initiate sustainable livelihood generation activities such as kitchen gardening. This allowed women to have extra income to help with household expenses and to slowly rebuild their lives.
- When Typhoon Hagupit struck the same communities a year later, people were trained and better prepared. The number of fatalities overall was significantly reduced, and more people knew how to react and reach safety.

The humanitarian crisis in Gaza

February marked six months since the ceasefire in Gaza. The conflict may have paused, but Gaza remains in crisis. People continue to live in damaged homes that do not provide adequate shelter, which resulted in the deaths of four children in a recent winter storm.

Access to food, water, healthcare and electricity remains severely limited. Of the 100,000 people who have been displaced, only 8% live in shelters. Displaced families don't have access to construction materials to rebuild their homes due to the ongoing conflict, leaving families and children vulnerable to the harsh winters.

Because of your support:

- 10,458 people in Gaza received food and basic necessities.
- Distribution of mattresses, blankets, warm clothes as well as plastic tarpaulin sheets to be used for shelter during the winter months.
- Medical supplies to health clinics for medicine and ongoing healthcare checks.
- Psychosocial support for children suffering from trauma.

Thank you for your immediate response to Cyclone Pam in Vanuatu. An update on the womens protection work will be available in the next edition of the newsletter.

► Teaching communities how washing hands can prevent the spread of Ebola.



Photo: ActionAid

▼ Nurses with supplies donated by ActionAid, provided health and psychosocial support.




Photo: ActionAid

▼ Leading discussions in the community through awareness programs.



Photo: ActionAid

In 2014, **24,872** confirmed, probable, and suspected cases of Ebola were reported in the region.


500,157 people supported to prevent and respond to Ebola.

For the first time in six months, **fewer than 100** new confirmed cases have been reported in a week in the region.

Ebola emergency work



In March 2014, the World Health Organisation reported an outbreak of Ebola in West Africa, declaring it a Public Health Emergency of International Concern.

Since then, this deadly epidemic has claimed the lives of 10,311 people. Your quick response to this crisis raised funds to ensure critical supplies were delivered and prevention awareness programs were initiated, to contain this virus.

24,872 confirmed, probable, and suspected cases have been reported in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea.

The epidemic has now moved to a second phase as the focus shifts from slowing transmission to ending the epidemic. To achieve this goal as quickly as possible, efforts have moved from rapidly building infrastructure to ensuring that safe burials and community engagement is used effectively.

Suffering through Ebola is a traumatic experience in itself. Returning home from an isolation ward can also be a challenge. Ebola survivors are often shunned and isolated by their communities. Many people still think survivors are contagious. This is where education and awareness programs are critical to prevent stigma.

In times of an emergency women and children are often affected the worst. Women accounted for 75% of those that fell victim to the Ebola virus, as a result of being the primary caregivers.

Because of your support:

- 500,157 people across Sierra Leone and Liberia were supported to prevent and respond to Ebola.
- Awareness raising programs, providing sanitation supplies to health centres, supply of food packages to quarantined families, and education support to children were provided.
- Neighbourhood watch teams (including traditional leaders and trained volunteers) were able to report and refer people with symptoms to treatment centres.
- Hand washing stations were set up to prevent another outbreak.
- Volunteers and partners continue to provide health messages, sanitation supplies to health centres and food and non-food items to quarantined families.
- Food and sanitation supplies as well as long term care to support 100 orphans.
- Women's rights training for Liberian police officers to ensure protection of vulnerable women.
- Survivor packs containing clothing and hygiene items for Ebola survivors.



From left to right, alleged witches Ashetu Chonfo, Sanatu Kojo, and Kasua Kaligri in a maize field in Kukuao, Northern Ghana.

Restoring dignity



Sano Kojo is 69 and has lived in a witch camp for over 30 years, abandoned by her family and accused of witchcraft for the death of a family member. Asana, 27, accused of witchcraft, was beaten and had melted plastic poured over her body while she was pregnant.

“People don’t care about the alleged witches. Once you are here you are forgotten,” says Sano.

Many of the women in the camps have been accused of being witches by relatives or neighbours. Once an accusation is made they are banished from their villages and sometimes chased out by a violent mob. The six witch camps in, Gambaga, Kuku, Gnani, Bonyase, Nabuli and Kpatinga, in northern Ghana, have existed as long as 100 years. They are mud huts with poor facilities. Food is in short supply and education services are limited. The camps are effectively prisons where the inmates have been given no fair trial.

When ActionAid highlighted the issue of the forgotten women accused of witchcraft in Ghana, your support was overwhelming.

ActionAid together with local partners has been working in all the camps focusing on addressing the immediate needs of the women. This project was undertaken with the aim of supporting women to reunite with their communities, to help their children go to school, to develop a housing project and to educate communities to stop the witch


allegation practices and respect the human rights of women. The project also looked at working with local government to provide women and children with support. Women’s groups have also been established where accused women can come together to discuss these issues and claim their rights collectively and more effectively.

To address the root cause of the problem, it was crucial to engage local government, traditional authorities, village elders and the media. In 2014, ActionAid collaborated with the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection to organise a national event to focus on this issue. This led to the successful closure of the first camp in Bonyase.

Thanks to your support, 55 alleged witches were reintegrated into their villages to start a new life.

To date 254 women accused of witchcraft have been successfully reunited with their community.

Yet there is still more work underway. It’s thanks to your support that ActionAid is able to continue to offer support and work towards shutting down the rest of the camps.



Your gift is giving women
in low income countries
the skills and support to
fight poverty.



Virginia is 30 years old and is a member of the Farmer Field School in Kenya. Thanks to you, she is learning how to farm drought-resistant crops and using new techniques that require less rainwater and drip irrigation.

Awakening the power of smallholder women farmers



Susan's dreams have expanded as her small farm flourished.

Photo: ActionAid

This is an entry from Sally's diary following a recent visit.

We walk along Kenya's Kaliki gravity-fed irrigation scheme, talking to women and men farmers, admiring their bountiful harvest of tomato and plump maize. It's so different to when I visited a year and a half ago.

People's dreams have expanded along with their crop production.

A year ago, Susan Apua and her husband Stephen dreamed of educating all their children and continuing to market their tomatoes. Now they are building their home thanks to the successful harvest they have had.

Another woman farmer tells me that she is guaranteed a crop even if she plants late because she is no longer dependent on seasonal rainfall. Gone is the dependency on relief food aid and handouts.

Women farmers in Isiolo worked hard to reach their new levels of productivity and well-being. The farmers we meet belong to the Kaliki irrigation farmers group who came together as a community to use irrigation water from the creek. This helped benefit the community in providing a steady source of water for their crops.

Moreover the introduction of banking skills in the women's group gatherings have given women farmers access to additional savings which they can re-invest in their farms or businesses. As always more needs to be done.

I meet women farmers on my visit and hear their stories. They tell me of their struggles, and their dreams for a better future. The women I meet are determined to fight this cycle of poverty. I also see how support and skills can help change and empower their lives for the better. I am truly thankful for your support that helps empower women farmers.



Photo: ActionAid

▲ **Dr Sally Henderson is the Senior Program Coordinator at ActionAid, and works closely with women farmers in Kenya.**

Campaigning for change

A mobile message to Joe Hockey around Sydney's streets

A publicly-funded mobile billboard calling on Joe Hockey to stop cutting the aid budget was parked outside his office and driven around his electorate. Despite the public outcry, the cuts to international aid were significant. Australia will drop from being the 13th most generous nation to the 20th out of 28 of the world's wealthiest countries. This will impact the poorest and most vulnerable.



Photo: ActionAid



Photo: ActionAid



Photo: ActionAid

Peace in Palestine

In July, ActionAid was one of 12 Australian international women's rights and development agencies to write to Foreign Minister Julie Bishop. This was to call on the Australian Government to urgently push for a permanent ceasefire in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel, as well as unhindered access for humanitarian assistance for civilians in Gaza.

G20 summit in Brisbane

G20 countries are more concerned with raising their own tax revenue than with establishing global solutions which will end the ongoing plunder of developing countries. Underfunded health care schemes (due to lost tax revenue) in West Africa have in part led to the catastrophic spread of the Ebola virus. ActionAid Activists took to the streets and media to campaign for better quality public services, which could be funded by ending corporate tax dodging.



Photo: ActionAid



Photo: ActionAid

Jump on board to keep up-to-date with ActionAid's campaigning work. Sign up at:

www.actionaid.org/jumponboard

[#jumponboard](https://twitter.com/jumponboard)



Gifts that make a difference

An ActionAid e-card is the perfect gift to give the person who has everything.

There are a range of e-cards for different occasions and the best thing is you can choose the amount you'd like to give, starting from as little as \$10.

So whether you're buying for a favourite friend or a hard-to-buy-for partner, you will know you are giving a wonderful gift while helping eradicate poverty and injustice.

If you're celebrating a birthday, wedding or anniversary why not ask your friends and family to make a donation in your honour instead of purchasing presents or flowers.

To find out more or purchase your card, visit www.actionaid.org/australia/e-card or call 1300 66 66 72

Become an ActionAid Hero

There are many of ways to get involved and become an ActionAid Hero and join the community of supporters fighting to end poverty around the world.

Whether it's by participating in one of the many sporting events around Australia or holding your own event, such as a birthday party, garage sale or morning tea.

We're always looking for opportunities to partner with community groups and clubs around Australia to join the global movement of people working together to further human rights and defeat poverty for all.

Upcoming events:

Sunday June 14 Brisbane Times City2South, Brisbane

Saturday July 25 The Age Run, Melbourne

Sunday July 26 Swan River Run, Perth

Sunday 9 August Sun-Herald City2Surf, Sydney



Photo: ActionAid

For a complete list of upcoming events go to www.actionaid.org/australia/fundraise

ActionAid in the community

Introducing global issues to the classroom is vital in ensuring that tomorrow's generation understand the issues and challenges facing women and children.

Do you know any children who would be interested in joining the fight to end poverty? Another great way of fundraising for ActionAid is in schools. It's fun, easy and educational. You could make us your charity of the year or just hold a one-off event. Whatever you decide to do, we're here to help you with support, ideas and resources.

To find out more go to www.actionaid.org/australia/fundraise or call us on 1300 66 66 72.

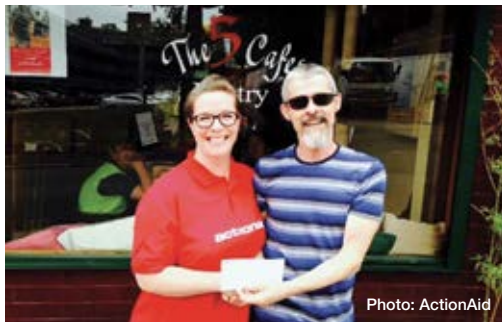


Photo: ActionAid

▲ **The Five Cafés Pantry in Newtown made a kind gift of \$500 to help women fight poverty.**

If you're a member of a community group, Rotary or Lions club and would like one of the ActionAid team to talk about the work we do or to fundraise to help women fight poverty, please contact Josh on (02) 9565 9131.

Meet three women fighting Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)



Dinah Chepkemei

ActionAid Program Manager, Kenya

Unlike the majority of girls she grew up with, neither Dinah or her two sisters were cut. This was deemed so out of the ordinary that Dinah was bullied by her peers.

Dinah's father was the reason for this decision, although he was excluded by his relatives for this choice. He was a teacher and insisted his girls be educated, and was against FGM.



Sadia Abdi Ali

ActionAid Country Director, Somaliland

97% of girls are genitally mutilated in Somaliland through an extreme form of FGM, which sees them cut and stitched up in childhood, again at marriage and then at the birth of every child.

Sadia's proudest achievement is saving her seven year old sister from FGM. Sadia's work has seen 53 women's groups created across the country to end FGM. Girls clubs are designed to support girls fight FGM.

Hellen Malinga

ActionAid National Women's Rights Coordinator, Uganda

Hellen has set up clubs to reach girls who haven't yet been mutilated and give them the skills to talk about it and break down the shame of not having undergone it.

Despite FGM being illegal in Uganda, the law has pushed the practice underground. Where previously public celebration parties would take place, girls are now increasingly being taken into hiding to be mutilated.



Hellen Malinga calls FGM 'a humiliating traditional practice which reduces the self-esteem of girls and robs the true essence of being a woman'.

Janet, (real name withheld) is 13 years old and from Kenya. She managed to escape from her father and uncle who both wanted to have her circumcised so they could get a large dowry for her.

Janet walked for six days through the bush to reach the Kongelai Division in West Pokot District, where she had heard that Theresa, a woman who is part of the ActionAid women's network, may give her shelter. Janet now lives with Theresa. She had never been to school before but is safe and now can write her name and is learning to read.

FGM poses a risk to over 3 million girls in Africa and 10 million girls globally each year.

The procedure has no health benefits and can cause severe complications at child birth, cysts, infection, infertility, new born deaths and long term complications. FGM is often carried out sometime between infancy and the age of 15.

It has been declared illegal in places like Uganda and Kenya, and even carries a 10 year prison sentence. But because this is a deeply rooted practice shrouded in silence and secrecy, it's been difficult to stamp it out completely.

Fifty year old Mary (real name withheld) in Eastern Uganda spent years cutting girls in the name of initiation into adulthood. She painfully reminisces about the moments that she subjected the girls to.

What is even more painful to her is that she never sterilised her knife. She used it on girl after girl, placing them at a risk of contracting diseases including HIV. After ActionAid campaigned against the practice, Mary is now engaging fellow elders in her community to look for an alternative passage into adulthood.

Because these decisions are often made by the community, the girls are often powerless to fight against it. But you can help change this.

There are passionate campaigners like Dinah, Sadia and Hellen fighting to end this practice. Your vital gift could support the work to educate communities and end this practice.

Projects are underway through grassroots level awareness and education programs for communities and village elders as well as in schools amongst children and teachers. But funding is limited. This is why your gift is so valuable and urgent.

How your gift will help

Your kind gift could provide vital support to continue awareness and education programs in the community. Or provide women's refuge centres where girls can find safe shelter to escape from FGM. Please make a gift today.

To make a gift, please use the donation form and post it back using the enclosed reply paid envelope, call 1300 66 66 72 or go online to www.actionaid.org/australia/fgm

Yes! I'll make a gift today

\$50 \$100 \$150

My choice: _____

Yes! I would like to make a monthly gift

(By credit card or direct debit)

\$10 \$20 \$30

My choice: _____

My details:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

My payment method:

My cheque/money order enclosed

(Please make payable to ActionAid Australia)

My credit card details

Visa MasterCard Amex Diners

Card Number:

□□□□, □□□□, □□□□, □□□□

Expiry date:

□□, □□

Name on card: _____

Signature: _____

Direct Debit

Bank: _____ BSB: _____

Account Number: _____

Name: _____

Signature: _____

**Will you join the fight to end
this horrifying practice?**

*Please make a
gift today.*

ActionAid is a global movement of people working together to further human rights and defeat poverty for all. Today, ActionAid reaches 25 million people in over 40 countries worldwide.

Your gift will support ActionAid's work with women and girls around the world and will be used where the need is deemed to be the greatest.

ActionAid Australia collects personal information about you in order to provide you with information and direct marketing materials in respect of our charitable objectives, and, unless you opt out or unsubscribe, may contact you in the future via any medium. To reduce overhead costs we may disclose your data to other organisations, that we trust, located outside of Australia to produce printed material and electronic communications. Failure to provide personal information may result in ActionAid Australia being unable to provide you with certain information and offers. Our Privacy Policy www.actionaid.org/australia/publications/privacy-policy contains information about: (i) how we obtain, store and use, plus how you can access and correct your personal information; (ii) how you can lodge a complaint regarding the handling of your personal information; and (iii) how any complaint will be handled by ActionAid Australia. You may contact our privacy officer with any queries via email: info.au@actionaid.org or mail: Locked Bag 5515 Camperdown NSW 1450 or telephone: 1300666672. ___ Please tick here if you do not want to receive future communications from ActionAid Australia. Occasionally we allow like-minded organisations, that we trust, to contact you with information that may be of interest to you, including some organisations located outside Australia.

___ Please tick here if you do not want to receive communications from other organisations. Those organisations allow us to do the same and this way we can reach more people with vital information.



Thank you
**for empowering
women to
fight poverty.**

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