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Talking action

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THANKS TO YOUR SUPPORT

Mary, a single mother and survivor of domestic violence, has turned her life around by farming onions.



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▲ Mary is full of smiles as she stands in her onion farm with her eldest daughter. Your support provides vital agricultural training and assistance for women farmers like Mary to set up farms and grow drought resistant crops. The vegetables are sold at local markets and the money is used to send the children to school and plan for the future.

Your gift is helping women and their children to have a better life.

Thank you for your passion to fight poverty and injustice.

Your support is making a real difference in the lives of women and girls around the world.

Formerly



ActionAid Australia was first established in 1967 as a national association called Austcare. In June 2009 Austcare changed its name to ActionAid Australia, becoming a full affiliate of the global network. Today, ActionAid reaches 27 million people in over 45 countries worldwide and is committed to fighting poverty and injustice.

You are a part of the solution

The movement to fight inequality builds from the ground up.

It is born from the struggle of people who have endured poverty and injustice.

It is born from passionate people like YOU in the community.

It begins with creating change for women farmers like Mary, or girls like Rosalie and Purity whose stories are featured in this edition of Talking Action.

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

This is why I am truly grateful for your support which is helping vital projects continue around the world. Projects that are empowering women through farming, setting up small businesses, learning new skills and earning money to support themselves and their children.

As we head into 2017, ActionAid's commitment remains steadfast – to stand together with marginalised communities. To have a strong women-led approach in our work in the community and to make social justice, poverty eradication and gender equality the centre of our purpose.

This is possible only because of generous supporters like yourself.



We recently witnessed the inauguration of the new US president and with it, a new cycle of resistance and struggle for rights. Led by women's movements, millions marched across the world to show unequivocal commitment to women's rights and human rights. Joined by ActionAid supporters across the USA, Netherlands, the UK and here in Australia, the women's march embraced our commitment to work with movements to create powerful positive change for a fair and just world.

I am eager to share the stories in this newsletter with you because YOU play an important role in making this happen.

Without supporters like yourself, this work in the community is not possible.

I cannot thank you enough.

I am truly grateful to you for your passion and commitment to support women and girls.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Archie Law'.

Archie Law
Executive Director, ActionAid Australia

Mary used to struggle to make ends meet, living on just over \$1 a day. Onion farming has changed her life, giving her the confidence and skills to create a better future for herself and her children.



Mary helps build hope for women farmers

Thanks to your support, more women farmers like Mary are receiving agricultural training to improve their livelihoods.

Last year, I wrote to you about Mary, an onion farmer living in Isiolo, Kenya. As a single mother and survivor of domestic violence, Mary lived in extreme poverty and struggled to feed her six children.

When Mary was selected for ActionAid farmer training, it changed her life. She received agricultural training, equipment and seeds that enabled her to earn an income and feed her children. Mary has been able to grow a good harvest of onions from dry land and has learned how to farm drought resilient crops. Despite the harsh climate in Isiolo, Kenya, Mary and many women farmers in the village are using their skills and learning to produce a good harvest.

Mary is now a leader in her community and an inspiration to other women. She is an active participant in the village banking program, which enables women to save money for their future.

Mary's successful harvests continue and she has increased her savings. She is looking to expand and improve her farm. She also takes the time to share her knowledge with other women in her village, to build their confidence and inspire them to take action and improve their own farms.

Mary is also a role model to her four young daughters. Her additional income means that the girls get to stay in school. Mary's strength and resilience to build a better

life for herself are valuable lessons for her daughters, who have hope and support to create a better life for themselves too.



▲ Susannah, Mary and Rosemary are members of the women's banking group. The blue box contains the group's savings and account keeping books.

Thank you so much for your overwhelming generosity to help women farmers in Kenya fight poverty and injustice.



Best friends Purity and Rosalie were so excited to show us around their school yard and farm. The girls have big dreams for the future.

Thank you. Your gift is an investment in the future of girls in Kenya.

A brighter future for girls in Kenya

Earlier this year, Kenyan ActionAid project officer Dinah Wambua wrote to you about Rosalie and Purity, students at Kamunyagia Primary School Girls Club in Kenya.

Girls in Kenya, especially in rural villages where ActionAid teams work, are at risk of female genital mutilation, dropping out of school, child marriage, early pregnancy and a life of poverty. Girls Club meetings provide a safe space for girls to learn about their rights and what to do if they are at risk.

Thanks to your generosity, work is underway to set up Girls Clubs in schools and villages where the need is the greatest.

Thank you for your incredible generosity and precious messages of support.

My message to the girls:

I was very happy to hear about your Girls Clubs, to help you as you grow into young women. Education is the best way to prepare you for the future and help others in your community.
With best wishes in all you do.
from Roslyn

My message to the girls:

my wish for you is, to grow up, where you're loved within your family.
That you find hope and happiness waiting for you.
And above all that there will be peace and equality between men and women, I send you my love. ♥.

My message to the girls:

Even though we have never met, my thoughts and prayers are with you.
Never lose sight of your dreams, hope and believe no matter what challenges life brings - work hard & never give up.

My message to the girls:

It's so wonderful to hear about the Girls Club + how you support each other!
As you carry your dreams + hopes inside you, may they grow big + strong - + become realised - just like the baby kangaroo
Best wishes!

My message to the girls:

As a leader of Girl Guides in Australia, I know the value of girls joining together to overcome challenges, learn new skills and have fun.
Our very best wishes from Leongatha Girl Guides to the Girls Clubs of Kenya

*Rosalie and Purity's names have been changed and the location of their school withheld, to protect their identities.

Women move mountains

In October last year, over 300 women farmers gathered at the base of Africa's highest mountain, Mt. Kilimanjaro to demand their governments take action to uphold their rights to land ownership.

Climbing a mountain is hard work; every step tests your commitment to the journey. This is something that the women of Africa experience every day in their battle for equal rights.

Of the 300 women, 28 women from Cameroon, Gambia, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia spent a week trekking up Mt Kilimanjaro. **They set themselves a challenge for their sisters across Africa - to campaign for change in laws and practices.**

This was an amazing feat for the women, many of whom travelled long distances from rural villages. In addition to support from Intrepid Foundation, a crowd funding campaign in Australia further helped supply the women with trekking clothing and boots.

The climb was especially difficult, as the women had never attempted anything like this before. There was the added challenge of volcanic ash and poor air quality.



Faith Atieno Ochieng, a woman farmer from Kenya, at Uhuru point, the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro.

Last October, women farmers from across Africa gathered at the base of Mount Kilimanjaro to demand their governments implement laws to recognise land rights for women.



© Georgina Goodwin/ActionAid

After the climb, at the base of the summit they were met by over 1000 people singing and cheering for the bravery of these incredible women, all of whom are now passionately campaigning for land rights for women across Africa.

Every climber walked away knowing they were even stronger after this challenge. One woman farmer from Malawi said, "If I can get to the top of this mountain, I can do anything."

Men and women do not have equal rights to land across many African countries where patriarchal laws and a lack of education make it difficult for women to own land that is rightfully theirs.

Many women in rural places have access to land only through their father or husband. So in the instance of divorce or the death of her husband, a woman may lose her land. Women are often accused of witchcraft and cast away from villages and their land taken over by relatives.

Owning land is key to the empowerment of women farmers because land is a crucial resource for poverty reduction, food security and rural development.

This campaign has been critical to the future of women in Africa in their fight for equal rights.

Not only has it drawn attention to the issue of land rights, it has also given rural women farmers the education and confidence to understand their rights, believe in themselves and campaign for change for their community.

Your support is helping communities campaign against the injustices they face.





Thank you.

Your gift is creating lasting change for women affected by extreme weather events.

Iftu, Anisa and Chaltu walk back home in the drought-affected town of Kombolcha in Ethiopia. Extreme weather and drought in many parts of Africa have impacted on food security and water availability.

With your support, 7,000 people have received emergency assistance including clean drinking water, livestock and seed provisions to grow food. Your support is also helping teams work with local schools to ensure girls don't miss out on education because they have to fetch water.

Margaret, 54, lives in the village of Simatwa in West Pokot Kenya, that has a high rate of female genital mutilation. She represents the changing attitudes of the community and has resisted the pressure to cut her three daughters and four granddaughters. Your support is helping change traditional beliefs through community education programs to end female genital mutilation.



Ending Female Genital Mutilation

Three million girls are at risk of female genital mutilation (FGM) each year. This is a deeply rooted traditional and cultural practice that continues to this day as communities believe this is a rite of passage for girls. Despite it being made illegal in many African countries, this custom continues in secret.

ActionAid teams across Kenya, Uganda and Somaliland are working in various ways to end this practice. Long-term change begins with changing mindsets and traditional attitudes.

The Kongelai Women's Network that Margaret belongs to meet to discuss the injustices women and girls face. The group discuss issues such as female genital mutilation and look at ways in which to educate the community, change the minds of village elders and eradicate this practice forever. This is just one of the many different ways in which teams are working to end FGM.

Thanks to your valuable support, work is underway across villages and in communities to end this cruel practice.

This includes community awareness programs, radio programs as well as training birth attendants and midwives to advocate against FGM. It is also done through Girls Clubs that educate girls on their rights and through safe houses where girls can find safety and refuge when at risk of FGM or violence.



▲ Your gift is helping set up safe houses to provide girls like Abigail seeking safety a place to stay and be protected from FGM.

Abigail ran away from home at the age of 13 when her parents wanted her to undergo female genital mutilation. She was scared because a girl in her neighbourhood had died from excessive bleeding the day before Abigail was to be cut. When she ran away, Abigail found safety in an ActionAid safe house. One year later, Abigail encouraged her best friend Purity, 13, to run away to the safe house when Purity was at risk of being cut herself. Abigail says, "FGM is just like death for me. I knew I would get married soon after and have complications during child birth."

Girls at the safe houses receive food and shelter and also get to stay in school and complete their education.

Haiti Hurricane response

6 MONTH UPDATE

Thank you for your immediate generosity to help the people of Haiti following Hurricane Matthew in October last year.



▲ Cholera became an immediate issue after the hurricane as poor water quality and sanitation management deteriorated. Communities received cholera kits and supplies of food, clean water and soap.



▲ Distribution of kits of essential items to women in Jeremie town, Grand'Anse.



▲ Each kit contained chlorine, 6 hydration packets, 5 bars of soap, a bottle of water purification solution, a roll of toilet paper, a cup and a bucket.



▲ Vouchers were distributed to affected residents to help them purchase building materials and seeds to rebuild their homes and farms.



▲ Buckets of water purification tablets and soap were delivered to families with the highest risk of developing diseases like cholera.



▲ Women's Friendly Space in Grand'Anse used for protection trainings and providing psychosocial support to women.

A snapshot of how your gift is helping.

- Hygiene kits to 3,000 people containing medicine and cholera kits.
- Materials to rebuild the homes of 1,100 female headed households.
- Vouchers to 1,000 women for microfinance projects.
- Seeds and crops to 1,000 people to rebuild their farms.
- Set up 4 safe spaces for women.
- Training for 50 carpenters and builders to learn skills to rebuild safer structures.
- Repair of a cassava plant reaching 300-500 people, mainly women.
- Community monitoring and training of 16 young people to assess program effectiveness.

Women activists campaigning against human and environmental rights violations in their community.



Solidarity with South African Activists

“We need to fight together. I understand that change is painful but by having one voice, one power at the end of the day we are going to fight this giant,” says Lorraine, a strong women’s rights activist in South Africa.

Polluted water, black lung disease, land grabs, air pollution, terrible conditions for workers and social breakdown in local communities – this is the harsh reality of South Africa’s coal industry.

For years, coal mining has resulted in serious human rights abuses for South Africans.

Despite this, Australia’s export credit agency, Efic is currently considering funding a new coalmine in Limpopo province, Boikarabelo. The plans would open up the Waterberg coalfield, thought to be the fourth largest remaining coal reserve in the world.

As the world moves to phase out handouts to fossil fuel projects, it’s hard to believe that an Australian Government agency like Efic is considering such a project.

This would not only be a disaster for the world’s climate. It will continue an abhorrent history of social rights abuse - and have a major impact on the rights of women.

ActionAid teams in South Africa and Australia are standing behind a determined group of women in South Africa campaigning to stop the proposed coalmine. Lorraine is part of the movement of women standing strong against the coal industry in their country.

“Mining in South Africa has many negative impacts for women, because women are the ones who bear the burden.

“We are affected in different ways. At the environmental level, the air that we breathe is polluted. The soil is no longer fertile. We cannot plant.

“We also lose loved ones at an early age due to the gasses. Almost every day we inhale the dangerous carbon dioxide that chokes the sky after they do blasting at the mine.”

Lorraine is demanding that Australia not invest in coal in South Africa. “Australian funding for the mine will violate South African women’s rights as well as all the people in this community and deepen the injustices faced by mining-affected communities.”

An ActionAid petition against the coalmine has been delivered to Efic. 12,367 Australians have added their signatures to the petition and joined with Lorraine in voicing their dismay at the prospect of this mine going ahead.

If you would like to join the campaign to stop the mine, please visit www.stopeficcoalmine.com



**The girls of Vanuatu
face discrimination.
Please will you help?**

From the day they are born, young girls in Vanuatu are treated differently.

“Boys are treated better than girls,” says a teacher at a gender-training workshop in Port Vila, Vanuatu. “Girls are never given the same opportunities as boys.”

In Vanuatu, violence and discrimination against girls, simply because of their gender, is widespread. Most girls in Vanuatu will experience violence in their lifetime.

But you can change this.

ActionAid is working with local schools to introduce Girls Clubs to Vanuatu to give girls the vital support they need to understand their rights and fight against the injustices they face.

But funding is limited. This is why I am asking for your help.

It is common for some girls in Vanuatu to never attend school, because educating girls is not a priority for families or communities. Girls are seen as supporters and workers, until it is time for an early marriage.

In a country that is affected by natural disasters on a regular basis, girls and young women also take on the main responsibility as carers.

Communities face many challenges, living on remote islands with little access to essential services or support. In times of crisis, it is the women in the community who step in and step up to support families.

Despite this, women's voices are often ignored. This has a significant impact on the future of young girls living across the remote islands of Vanuatu.

Some communities are still recovering from the devastation caused by Cyclone Pam in 2015. ActionAid is continuing work with the local community to provide long-term support and identifying the areas of greatest need.

Initiating community awareness programs and placing Girl's Clubs in schools was identified as an urgent priority for the community.

Through the Girl's Club, the young women in Vanuatu will learn about their rights and will be supported to speak up and speak out against the injustices they face.

They will learn about choice and rights that will empower and inform girls that life can be different despite what they have heard and witnessed all their lives.



▲ Girls discuss the issues they face at school and in their communities.

At the Girls Club:

- Girls will be taught to understand their rights, how to identify gender gaps and learn about protection and resilience.
- They will learn to identify violence against girls and women.
- Safe learning environments will be created to learn about reproductive health and how to challenge discriminatory practices that promote the marginalisation of girls.
- Girls will be taught to identify and recognise their needs during a natural disaster or emergency.
- Girls will be trained in leadership and strategies that can help young women's economic empowerment and understanding of economic justice.

Your gift today could provide facilitators to run the program, as well as the printing of educational materials and teaching aids for the lessons at the Girl's Clubs.

Your gift today could help set up Girls Clubs in Vanuatu and provide young girls with the best support for their future.

To make a gift:

☎ **Call** 1300 66 66 72

➦ **Online** www.actionaid.org/australia/hope

✉ **Post** Donation Form using the reply envelope

Please will you help? Your gift is a gift of hope for the girls in Vanuatu.

Thank you

**for empowering women
and girls to fight poverty
and injustice.**

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**ActionAid Girls Clubs are teaching
girls like Aida, 16, about their rights.**