

A low-angle photograph of a group of women, likely in a developing country, looking upwards. The central woman is wearing a brown cap and a brown sequined jacket over a bright pink floral top, with her right arm raised in a fist. To her right, another woman wears a blue patterned top and a blue shawl. The background is a bright, cloudy sky.

**act!onaid**

# Women's Leadership for Global Justice

ActionAid Australia Strategy

2017–2022



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## The world around us

**In 45 countries worldwide, ActionAid is working towards a just, equitable and sustainable world in which every person enjoys the right to a life of dignity, freedom from poverty and all forms of oppression. Right now, amidst rapid change and instability, we have a unique opportunity to achieve the world we envision. People's movements and coalitions led by those facing injustice are rising up to challenge growing inequality and xenophobia. The power of the feminist movement is growing in the face of attacks on women's sexual and reproductive rights and public tolerance of misogyny.**

Women are leading movements to protect their environments and build sustainable alternatives, and mobilising to lead early warning and emergency response in the face of worsening disasters. Campaigning has brought increased public attention to widespread corporate tax evasion and illicit financial flows. Technology is shaping our lives in new ways, and enhancing and opening new opportunities in the fight for social justice.

At the same time, the world is experiencing a moment of global transition in which the dominant economic model and other social and environmental forces are entrenching and aggravating inequalities and creating more significant challenges in the lives of the women we work with. There is increasing polarisation of people and entrenchment of highly nationalistic, protectionist policies based on fear of one another. Around the world, women living in poverty are struggling to adapt to climate change, and to build their resilience with the increasing frequency, scale and impact of disasters. Displacement due to climate change, as well as conflicts and other humanitarian disasters, is on the rise. Women's labour conditions continue to be unpaid, exploitative and poorly paid in many parts of the world. Inequalities of power and wealth are growing with deregulation, privatisation of public services and the dismantling of social protection. Citizens continue to be denied access to natural resources while the political space for civil society and defenders of human rights is shrinking in many of the countries where we work.

In Australia we have a moral responsibility as a wealthy nation, and an opportunity, to act on the interconnected challenges facing women of economic injustice, the climate crisis, and humanitarian emergencies. Certain Australian government and corporate policies and practices contribute significantly to these challenges at a global scale, and the consequences are visible at home and abroad. Here in Australia, we must act in solidarity with those fighting for a more just world, and take action to hold Australian decision makers to account.

We must continue to connect our struggles in Australia with the international struggles of women who are fighting for **economic justice, climate justice, and their rights in emergencies. Together, we can** build a different pathway for humanity.



## Vision

A just, equitable and sustainable world in which every person enjoys the right to a life of dignity, freedom from poverty and all forms of oppression.



## Purpose

To achieve social justice, gender equality and poverty eradication by working with people living in poverty and exclusion and together with people's movements and grassroots activists.

ActionAid Australia advances its vision and purpose by empowering women to claim their rights and campaign against injustices. Women make up 70% of those living in poverty and are also the most effective leaders, cultivating inclusive and sustainable change in their communities.



## Values

**Mutual Respect**, requiring us to recognise the innate worth of all people and the value of diversity.

**Equity and Justice**, requiring us to ensure the realisation of our vision for everyone, irrespective of gender, sexual orientation and gender identity, race, ethnicity, caste, class, age, HIV status, disability, location and religion.

**Integrity**, requiring us to be honest, transparent and accountable at all levels for the effectiveness of our actions and our use of resources and open in our judgements and communications with others.

**Solidarity** with people living in poverty and exclusion will be the only bias in our commitment to the fight against poverty, injustice, and gender inequality.

**Courage of Conviction**, requiring us to be creative and radical, bold and innovative - without fear of failure - in pursuit of making the greatest possible impact on the causes of poverty, injustice, and gender inequality.

**Independence** from any religious or party-political affiliation.

**Humility**, recognising that we are part of a wider alliance against poverty and injustice.

## Who we are

**ActionAid Australia is a women’s rights organisation. We are a member of a global Federation working in over 45 countries to achieve social justice, gender equality and poverty eradication.**

**Guided by feminist values and analysis, ActionAid stands with women experiencing injustice around the world, and supports them to take action to claim their human rights by collectively confronting the injustices they face. We recognise that patriarchy and poverty are inextricably linked and believe that a feminist approach is essential to ending poverty and injustice.**

We recognise the power in people and work in alliance with those who share our vision. We work with our growing community activist network to hold Australian decision makers to account and to ensure that Australia is fulfilling its responsibility to protect and uphold the rights of women everywhere.

We are bold in our actions, and speak out against injustices when others won’t. We are determined. We are uncompromising in our feminist approach and our pursuit of a just, equitable and sustainable world for all.

We recognise that we live and work on the land of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders who have faced two centuries of dispossession of land. We are committed to learning and growing our capacity to support indigenous struggles for justice in Australia.

### **Our story**

Over 40 years, ActionAid Australia has built a strong foundation to increase our impact as we fight for women’s rights, global justice and poverty eradication. We brought experience in defending asylum seekers’ rights and ensuring protection in emergencies from Austcare, to the ActionAid Federation when we became ActionAid Australia in 2009. Since then, we have sharpened this expertise, supporting transformational programs led by women living in poverty and exclusion around the world. We have supported women to achieve access to and control over productive resources and decision making, and protection during humanitarian disasters. We have opened space for women’s leadership in advocacy and policy influencing at the national, regional, and international levels.

Over the past five years, we have firmly established ourselves in Australia as a global women’s rights organisation supporting women living in poverty and exclusion in communities around the world, and have begun campaigning to address the structural causes of injustice.

# How change happens

**ActionAid believes poverty arises because people lack power. People are discriminated against, treated unequally, denied opportunities to participate in decision making processes affecting their lives and denied access to and control over the resources essential to their well-being.**

This happens at the individual, household, community, national and international levels, when privileged groups gain control over resources and influence over others. It is essential to address these power imbalances if we are to eliminate poverty, gender inequality, and injustice.

Social justice, gender equality and poverty eradication are achieved through purposeful individual and collective action to shift unequal and unjust power, whether it is hidden, visible or invisible.

Empowering women living in poverty and exclusion is crucial to achieving women's rights and ending patriarchy, and ultimately achieving social justice, gender inequality, and poverty eradication. We will always put women's voices, hopes for the future and leadership at the heart of our work, supporting women to organise collectively and mobilise with other allies to strengthen their power to affect change. Active and organised people develop and drive change; which will transform power when led by those who are directly affected by injustice.

Collective efforts and struggles in Australia and internationally have a greater impact when they are linked through solidarity and campaigning between communities, people's organisations, social movements, and other allies to strengthen the power of people to drive structural change. This includes campaigning and working to influence policy to transform power structures from the local to the global, as well as defining and driving alternatives.



# How we work

**ActionAid uses a Human Rights Based Approach to challenge the oppression and exclusion that people experience in their everyday lives and to redress the power imbalances that deny people their human rights. A human rights lens recognises the capacity of people living in poverty and exclusion to lead change and define alternatives.**

In advancing our Human Rights Based Approach, ActionAid Australia uses intersectional feminist analysis which recognises that poverty intersects with widespread gender inequality and other forms of discrimination including race, ethnicity, disability, gender identity, sexual orientation and age. We place women living in poverty and exclusion at the centre of our efforts to shift power and challenge patriarchy, dehumanisation, discrimination, racism, homophobia and xenophobia, all of which drive violations of people's fundamental human rights and freedoms.

## Our Human Rights Based Approach

Our approach includes four interconnected methodologies: empowerment, solidarity, campaigning and alternatives.

- **Empowerment:** Supporting women living in poverty and exclusion to become aware of their rights, conscious of the systems and structures that deny their rights, and able to take proactive steps to challenge oppression.
- **Solidarity:** Strengthening and building movements for change that are led by those most affected by poverty and exclusion, and build collective power to demand change.
- **Campaigning:** Harnessing people power to achieve demands for measurable political or social change in policy and practice, open political space and build public support.
- **Alternatives:** Building a more just world by proposing alternatives to the systems and practises we criticise, ensuring the people we work with are central in defining and driving these alternatives.

# Our strategic priorities

Over the next five years, we will work with the ActionAid Federation to secure human rights, the equitable redistribution of resources, and the resilience of people living in poverty and exclusion.



**ActionAid Australia will prioritise climate justice and economic justice for women, and their rights in emergencies. This recognises that climate change, unjust economic policies, and humanitarian crises undermine women’s human rights and entrench poverty, and addressing these is central to achieving our mission.**

Our focus areas reflect the impact we can have by applying the pillars of our HRBA – empowerment, solidarity, campaigning and alternatives – across our work in Australia and internationally.

Our approach recognises that for the women we work with these injustices intersect, and ensures the lived experience and leadership of women living in poverty and exclusion is at the heart of our agenda. We will work towards an integrated agenda that recognises the intersections of these three priorities in women’s lives.

## Who we will work with

We will partner with women living in poverty and exclusion by strengthening their capacities to take action collectively and individually, calling for alternatives and opposing oppressive policies. This will include women:

- Marginalised by unjust economic policies
- Affected by conflict, disasters, and forced migration
- Experiencing the worst impacts of climate change and extractive industries
- Working in the informal economy, including smallholder farming
- Experiencing sexual and gender-based violence in conflict

We will seek to build a strong **activist network and supporter base in Australia**, and work in solidarity with **movements and alliances**, recognising the power of people to create lasting change.

We will work in solidarity with:

- Women’s organisations, feminist alliances and social justice movements in Australia and internationally.
- Women’s organisations in the Pacific which are facing increased frequency and scale of disasters due to climate change.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander movements, actively looking for ways that we can support their struggles for justice.
- Movements fighting for the just and humane treatment of those seeking asylum.

## Priority 1: Economic justice for women

### WHAT WE ARE FIGHTING FOR

We are fighting for more equitable redistribution of the world's resources to achieve economic justice for women living in poverty and exclusion. This includes decent work and labour rights for women; the recognition, revaluing and redistribution of unpaid work; women's increased access to and control over productive resources; and accessible gender-responsive public services funded through progressive taxation systems.

### OUR GOAL

Promote economic justice for women living in poverty and exclusion by working in solidarity to secure just economic policies and more equitable redistribution of resources.



## OUR FOCUS AREAS

### EMPOWERMENT:

- Supporting women living in poverty and exclusion to gain a more equitable distribution of resources through gender-responsive public services, decent work, and access to and control over productive and natural resources.

### SOLIDARITY:

- Resourcing and strengthening feminist alliances and movements working to transform the economic system.
- Shifting the narrative on economic policies by ensuring the voices and priorities of women are central to public debate.

### CAMPAIGNING:

- Campaigning for government policies on tax, trade, and privatisation to promote justice for women living in poverty and exclusion around the world.
- Exposing Australian corporations when their practices undermine women's economic justice in the communities where we work.

### ALTERNATIVES:

- Providing a feminist analysis of the economic policies in Australia that impact on the lives of women we work with.
- Driving just alternatives with the women we work with and allies to secure the global redistribution of women's unpaid care work.



## Priority 2: Women's rights in emergencies

### WHAT WE ARE FIGHTING FOR

We are fighting for a world in which women living in poverty and exclusion are resilient in the face of increasing humanitarian crises and leading preparedness, response and recovery efforts to secure their rights in emergencies. This includes supporting women and their organisations to be active in decision-making at all levels of humanitarian action; resourcing women-led humanitarian innovation and protection efforts; and securing justice for those facing forced migration due to crisis.

### OUR GOAL

Secure and protect women's rights in emergencies by promoting the leadership and collective efforts of women most affected in humanitarian crises and conflict.



## OUR FOCUS AREAS

### EMPOWERMENT:

- Expanding the resources and opportunities for women's leadership and collective efforts in emergencies at all levels to shift the power and secure women's rights in conflict and disaster settings.

### SOLIDARITY:

- Working in alliances in Australia and overseas to promote women's leadership in emergencies and provide feminist analysis of the gendered impacts of disasters, conflict, and forced migration. This includes continuing to support a strong alliance of women's organisations in the Pacific.
- Working in solidarity with movements working towards the just treatment of those seeking asylum in Australia.
- Mobilising financial supporters to contribute to women-led emergency efforts through appeals and the Arise Emergency Fund.

### CAMPAIGNING:

- Supporting women most affected by crises to organise and influence domestic, regional, and international policy fora related to disasters, conflict and displacement.
- Holding the Australian Government accountable to commitments to women's leadership and gender equality in emergencies.

### ALTERNATIVES:

- Driving best practice and technological innovation to ensure women affected by crises are supported to lead their own protection needs and community-based responses.



## Priority 3: Climate justice for women

### WHAT WE ARE FIGHTING FOR

We are fighting for a world in which women living in poverty and exclusion and their communities are more resilient to climate change, and have access to justice and reparations for the impacts that occur. This includes reducing the worst impacts of climate change, by replacing economic and energy systems that cause environmental destruction and inequality with just alternatives and energy democracy.

### OUR GOAL

Advance climate justice by supporting women most affected by climate change to build resilience and adapt to climate change, while driving policies that mitigate and reduce its impacts.



## OUR FOCUS AREAS

### EMPOWERMENT:

- Supporting women from affected communities to adapt to climate change and build resilience by increasing their access to resources and decision-making.

### SOLIDARITY:

- Promoting the voices and leadership of women affected by climate impacts and fossil fuel extraction to lead the climate justice movement.
- Highlighting the stories of the women we work with to shift the narrative on climate change and build solidarity with the Australian public.

### CAMPAIGNING:

- Campaigning for the Australian Government to reduce carbon emissions in line with our global responsibility, phase out fossil fuel subsidies and exports to low income countries, and provide our fair share of finance for adaptation and just solutions.
- Exposing harmful environmental practices of Australian corporations and promoting access to justice for communities.

### ALTERNATIVES:

- Resourcing women from affected communities to drive just and sustainable alternatives that promote resilience and energy democracy, drawing on Indigenous knowledge and technological innovation.



# Our strategic enablers

Over the next five years we will focus on five strategic enablers, which are critical to the achievement of our priorities.



## Building our people power

ActionAid Australia has always worked in partnership with a community of donors, online campaigners, volunteers, and the ActionAid Federation. We recognise that we must invest in our people-power so we can transform the structures here in Australia that result in poverty, inequality and injustice around the world.

To do this, we will:

- Build an activist network that will drive campaigns, engage communities on priority issues, and build solidarity with women around the world.
- Grow our relationships with our existing financial supporters and establish relationships with new donors, recognising that their contributions are critical actions in the movement for women's rights. Continue to build structures that will allow meaningful consultation with our key stakeholders, including the women we work with, and Australian partners and supporters.
- Support movements, organisations and struggles aligned with our strategic priorities, with a focus on those that are led by women.
- Be active contributors and leaders in the ActionAid Federation, sharing resources (financial, people-power and knowledge) with other countries and the global Secretariat wherever we can.

## Living our values

We aspire to create a culture where we embody our values, care for each other, embrace uncertainty with courage, and dare to take risks even if we sometimes fail. We are committed to becoming a more diverse organisation where all staff members can thrive, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, religion, ability, sexual orientation and HIV status.

To do this we will:

- Continue to challenge patriarchy within our organisation by applying intersectional feminist analysis and feminist values to all that we do.
- Invest in our team by providing holistic learning opportunities that will allow us to create a workplace that attracts and supports those who share our vision.
- Work to dismantle colonisation and build cultural competency in our organisation, ensuring our behaviours, policies, and partnerships enable us to stand in solidarity with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander movements.
- Increase the level of diversity among ActionAid staff through our recruitment, internal culture and human resource management processes.
- Maintain our unwavering commitment to reducing our environmental impact and carbon footprint.

## Raising our profile

We recognise that in order to meet our strategic priorities, our voice must be loud and our actions visible. We will continue to grow ActionAid's profile in Australia, and supporting the women we work with to have their voices heard by the Australian public and decision makers.

To do this we will:

- Invest in communications tools, ensuring we are using cutting edge digital technology and traditional media to distribute our messages widely and effectively.
- Support the women we work with to tell their stories and communicate their alternatives.
- Build the capacity of our team to tell the stories of the women we work with and amplify their voices through digital platforms and traditional media.

## Investing in technology

We recognise that digital technology and infrastructure will enable us to become more efficient and effective across everything that we do. We aspire to become a more technologically-savvy organisation, adept at using technology to organise ourselves, reach our supporters, empower our partners, raise funds and campaign for change. This requires both a cultural and resource shift.

To achieve this we will:

- Equip our staff with the skills they need to create change in a world that is increasingly driven by digital technology.
- Invest in the technology infrastructure that we need to achieve our objectives as efficiently and effectively as possible.
- Use technology to create program efficiencies and facilitate closer connections with the women we work with around the world.

## Growing our resources

We recognise that expanding our resources and increasing the flexibility of our funding model is essential to maximising our impact. It will also be enhanced by our ability to find creative operational efficiencies and good stewardship of the funds entrusted in us.

To do this, we will:

- Secure more untied funding from a variety of fundraising and revenue-generating sources and reduce our reliance on any one source.
- Demonstrate the impact of what we do and continue to build relationships with institutional donors, trusts, foundations, individuals, and private-sector partnerships where they are aligned with our values.
- Provide opportunities for our supporters to take multiple actions in support of women's rights, by encouraging our activists to become financial supporters and our financial supporters to become activists.
- Uphold our commitment to transparency and accountability of the financial resources entrusted to us.



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