



Salma Abdul-Waheed addresses the women of the Tungan Ashere community during the distribution of food and non-food items by ActionAid. Photo: ActionAid

# Women on the Frontlines of COVID-19

ActionAid Response Update August 2020

**arise**

Women leading  
crisis response.



## Our Core Humanitarian Principles



Supporting and promoting women's leadership



Enabling and empowering locally-led responses



Ensuring strong accountability to affected populations

# A woman's place is leading the charge

## Impact By Numbers

Women-led emergency response in **40 countries**

**10,062,920** people reached

**1,474,658** water, sanitation and hygiene items distributed

**1,560,196** food relief items distributed

Public health message have reached **5 million** people

As the world comes to terms with the new reality of living with coronavirus, ActionAid is supporting women and girls on the frontline of the crisis to stop the spread, save lives and defend women's rights. As the majority of the world's health workers, carers, home-schoolers and informal workers, women and girls are bearing the brunt of the global pandemic. This is why ActionAid supports local women to lead efforts to stop the spread of the virus in their communities.

**Crises exacerbate existing gender inequalities, but entire communities benefit when women are equipped to lead.**

Working with local partners, ActionAid has reached **10,062,920 people** as of July 2020, providing life-saving essentials such as food, soap and water, as well as funding women's shelters and combating the spread of misinformation at community level through awareness campaigns.

Rohingya women queuing outside ActionAid's women-friendly space in Cox's Bazar. Photo: ActionAid.



“ We led the food distribution and educated the community about COVID-19. The experience created a lot of confidence in us and we will take charge when need be

Rukia Maguruka, women leader \ Tanzania

Salma Abdul-Waheed addresses the women of the Tungan Ashere community during the distribution of food and non-food items by ActionAid. Photo: ActionAid

## Africa

ActionAid is responding to COVID-19 across 19 countries in Africa and as of July 2020 has reached **5,572,665 people**. Key highlights include:

- **COVID-19 awareness** – in countries such as Burundi, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Tanzania and Kenya we are sharing information on how the coronavirus is transmitted and preventative strategies through mass education campaigns over radio, TV, printed and social media, translated into local languages to reach the most vulnerable.
- **Women-led community awareness** – just as important as our mass campaigns is our training of local women leaders who in turn train their communities on hygiene practices and coronavirus prevention. In Ghana, ActionAid's youth partner Activista has designed clear and concise messaging targeting people living with disabilities, to spread awareness on physical distancing.
- **Advocating for women's rights** – at a time when violence against women and the burden of care is rising, we are working with women's groups to advocate for their needs at the community and national levels. In Rwanda we have worked with the Rwanda Women's Council to advocate for domestic violence prevention and the redistribution of unpaid care work on community radio & TV talk shows.
- **Distributing essential relief items** – whether it is dignity kits or food, we are supporting vulnerable groups with the basics they need to stay safe and healthy. In Liberia we have helped distribute 150,000 masks to more than 60 communities across the country.
- **Distributing hygiene kits** – with handwashing more important than ever, we have been providing cartons of soap, bleach and bottles of hand sanitiser to communities in need. In Senegal, ActionAid has reached 70,000 people with these kits.



## Americas

ActionAid is working in **Haiti, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala and Peru**, with local partners and women's groups. Key areas of our response include:

- **Women-led information campaigns** – in Haiti, we have reached 366,000 people by supporting local women leaders who are educating their communities in their local language on how to stay safe from the virus.
- **Advocating for women's rights** – with a focus on supporting survivors and preventing violence against women. In Brazil ActionAid is advocating for women's rights and gender responsive public services. We are raising awareness of the impacts of unpaid care work and the need for a basic income for vulnerable populations, via campaign actions and local and national media.
- **Distributing COVID-19 prevention kits to the most vulnerable** – in Colombia, 11,986 people have been reached with hygiene kits including hand sanitiser, face masks, educational materials and disinfectants.

## Middle East

ActionAid is meeting the critical needs of women and girls in **Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine**, where for many, coronavirus is compounding the impacts of the Syrian refugee crisis. We are:

- **Providing urgently needed food and hygiene, prioritizing women-headed households** – in Lebanon, communities have seen severe losses of income. We have distributed food vouchers and other essentials to meet the immediate needs of 540 families.
- **Training women's circles** – women have been trained and mentored in how to keep safe from violence and other risks and connect with legal support, to ensure they can stay safe and mentally well. In Jordan, we are providing psychosocial support to these circles.
- **Working closely with young people to reach the most marginalised** – in Palestine youth groups have reached 200 families in quarantine with hygiene kits, focusing on the elderly and those with a disability who have lost their livelihoods due to the pandemic.

“ We are thinking about the women who are in quarantine. They are in sensitive situations. It was suggested that we can provide them with hygiene kits

Samah Kassab, ActionAid Palestine

Volunteers get food items ready for distribution. Photo: ActionAid



Noor Aeysha, 60, holding a bag of seeds provided by the ActionAid women friendly space. Photo: ActionAid

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With these seeds I want to grow a garden. If we have vegetables to eat, then it will help us greatly

Noor Aeysha, Bangladesh

## Asia-Pacific

ActionAid is responding to coronavirus in 10 countries across Asia and the Pacific, plus we are supporting the Shifting the Power Coalition in the Pacific to reach a further 5 countries. We have reached **4,109,214 people** including through:

- **Raising awareness of women's protection** – the risk of violence has significantly increased for women during this crisis and so supporting them to stay safe is a priority. In Bangladesh, ActionAid is offering midwifery support, remote case management and recording of violence cases to ensure services are maintained during the pandemic, while also providing psychosocial support to people who have lost family members to coronavirus.
- **Providing essential relief and hygiene supplies** – in Thailand, ActionAid is providing relief packages to children and women through 125 schools across the country, while in India ActionAid has reached 642,975 people with sanitation supplies such as masks, gloves, detergent and disinfectants.
- **Providing direct cash assistance for women** – we are supporting women, who make up the majority of workers in the casual and informal sectors, who are facing the worst financial impacts of lockdowns. In Myanmar, cash grants have been given to 3,500 migrants and 1,000 women garment factory workers who have lost work.
- **Engaging young people**– we are working to amplify young people's voices and strengthen their skills in humanitarian response. In Nepal, ActionAid is using social media to raise awareness and offering online courses to train the next generation of humanitarian responders.
- **Supporting women's organisations to lead response efforts** – through the Shifting the Power Coalition, ActionAid is providing rapid response grants to enable women's groups in 5 countries to lead prevention and response efforts, including assessing community needs, providing food relief to vulnerable households and training young women to run community awareness campaigns.



# In focus Vanuatu

ActionAid has worked in Vanuatu since Cyclone Pam devastated the island in 2015. Women face widespread gender inequalities, their voices often go unheard and their needs unmet. ActionAid has focused on establishing and supporting a network of women's groups, known as Women I Tok Tok Tugeta, to lead their communities in disaster preparedness and response.

## Scaling up women's leadership

Now this network is responding to crises on multiple fronts. As they work to prevent a global health pandemic and respond to its devastating economic impacts, a category five cyclone has also impacted more than half the population. Despite this, women are rising up in the face of adversity. 300 women leaders have been trained and are leading their communities in COVID-19 prevention, reaching 20,000 people.

## Innovating to stop the spread

Women leaders shared the first public health message about coronavirus through ActionAid's Women's Weather Watch SMS network. Set up to share alerts when dangerous weather was approaching, the team worked with the Ministry of Health to develop a message, explaining in non-technical language how to prevent the virus' spread. It directly reached 77,148 people, more than a quarter of the population.

While keeping their communities safe, women leaders are also making strides for gender equality that will last beyond the crisis. As Robyn, a leader from Eton puts it: **"Women in my community are taking the lead in disaster preparedness and humanitarian crises. Our husbands are beginning to acknowledge this transformation."**

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Robyn, a leader from Eton



Anne Pakoa, Founder and Technical Adviser - Vanuatu Young Women for Change. Photo: ActionAid



Nihinlola (Lola) Ayanda, ActionAid Nigeria communications coordinator during a distribution of relief items to the Tungan Ashere community. Photo: ActionAid



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