

# Women leading change.

ARISE FUND  
NEWSLETTER

May 2024



A mothers group for school children meets with an ActionAid staff member, Kenya

We are delighted to present the second edition of the Arise Fund newsletter, showcasing the incredible impact we've made together in supporting women at the forefront of crisis response.

In the span of eight years, we've raised \$9.9 million and empowered over 36,000 women leaders on the frontlines of crisis to adapt to climate change, prepare for and respond to disasters, and protect their rights in emergencies. Your support of the Arise Fund is amplified by the Australian Government who matches your donations through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).

We are excited to share how your support is making a real difference in empowering women and strengthening communities through the Arise Fund.

**Read inside:**  
Impact from Vanuatu  
Türkiye Syria Earthquake  
Gaza Emergency  
Arise Trivia Night

## ARISE SINCE 2017:



**36K+**

women and girls trained to prepare for and lead disaster response



**\$9.9m**

funds raised

**arise**

Women leading  
crisis response.

**act:onaid**





# Vanuatu

Lauren Hicks, Nicola Blackburn, Sam Watson-Wood, Flora Vano and Tashi Wheeler in Vanuatu

## A week of inspiring stories, resilience and true leadership in Vanuatu

During the first week of May, a group of women embarked on a memorable trip to Vanuatu. Lauren Hicks, Tashi Wheeler, Nicola Blackburn and Sam Watson-Wood met the Ni-Vanuatu women ActionAid works with on the islands of Tanna and Efate. Lauren and Tashi are members of ActionAid's Arise Leadership Circle, a group of Australian women leaders committed to transformational change for women across the world.

### Lauren Hicks, Head of Social Impact at QBE Insurance, shares her reflections on the trip:

"I recently had the opportunity to join ActionAid on a trip to Vanuatu to see first-hand some of the programs that the Arise Fund has been able to support. I have been a member of the Arise Leadership Circle for a little over 12 months, offering my experience working in social impact and leading a corporate foundation to help raise awareness and the profile of this very important work.

From the first time I met Michelle, ActionAid's Executive Director, and heard about the Arise Fund, it was immediately clear their work is critical in empowering women facing the consequences of the climate crisis.

**The women driving change in Vanuatu are truly inspiring – they are strong and determined individuals working together to grow the capacity and capability of climate resilience in their communities.** What I found to be so effective is the multi-program approach executed through the Women I Tok Tok Tugeta (WITTT) and WITTT Sunshine networks. This local women-led movement empowers diverse women to prepare for disasters, understand their rights, and engage with provincial and national stakeholders to ensure their needs are met, and shape disaster planning and response.

To achieve a multi-program approach, ActionAid has implemented programs that focus on women's leadership, economic empowerment, disaster preparedness, early warning systems, community resilience, as well as disaster response and recovery.

During my trip, I saw true ingenuity and entrepreneurial thinking through the creation of economic hubs – like Mama's Poultry Farm and the Women's Resilience Market, that sell surplus vegetables in the community and ensure food security during times of crisis. **I heard women talking about nature-based solutions coupled with local traditional knowledge applied to agriculture and response efforts – a wonderful opportunity to learn from their expertise on such complex matters presented with such clarity and simplicity – we have so much to learn.**

The effective activation of a multi-layered communications and early warning system through the Women Wetem Weta network, a phone tree system allowing women to share messages about incoming weather patterns with remote communities across the country, was impressive – the women shared examples of where this had been implemented so quickly and effectively that harm to the community was minimised.

I heard examples where the perception and attitude towards the network and women's involvement from their families had shifted from apathy to their families showing support, even getting involved. The network is empowering women to be part of the solution to the climate crisis, they are sharing lived experiences, supporting each other, sharing stories and giving power to their voices. **I have been truly inspired and moved by this experience, but it is also very clear there is still so much more to be done."**



# Ruth's Story: Building Climate Resilient Livelihoods

Climate-related disasters have become a daily reality for the women of Tanna and pose a growing threat to their food security. Women in Tanna rely on selling produce from their gardens and fruit trees at the market for their livelihood. **However, as the impacts of climate change escalate, it is becoming more and more difficult for women in Vanuatu to sustain an income.**

"From where I live, the sun is scorching causing our plants to die. We are now planning to relocate the planting site near the cliffs just to avoid the sun and also the stony area. Only during the rainy season, they grow well but otherwise, we go short on food during dry season," said Ruth Tuman, Women I Tok Tok Tugeta Network, Tanna

Ruth joined the WITTT Network in 2021, in the hopes that she could learn skills that might support her to improve her livelihood, generate income, and become better prepared in the face of climate change and increasing disasters.

**"I personally have learnt a lot of things. I usually stay at home as a housewife that regularly visits the garden and generates no income. But the network taught me a lot; how to make virgin oil, lemon juice, cakes, and chips. Through the network, I have learnt things which really support my grandchildren and I,"** adds Ruth Tuman.

The WITTT program empowers Ni Vanuatu women like Ruth to take responses into their own hands to create localised women-led solutions to the challenges they are facing. WITTT leaders are becoming empowered to share and tailor the skills they've learnt to address the specific issues faced by women in their communities, such as relocating their gardens to locations less impacted by climate change and learning alternative ways to make an income.



Ruth Tuman



**In the last year, the WITTT network has grown from 5,000 to 9,000 women, reaching more communities to ensure gender responsive emergency responses across the country.**

# Türkiye-Syria Earthquake: One year on

**It's been a year since destructive earthquakes struck Syria and Türkiye, destroying homes and lives – killing over 50,000 people.**

The communities affected have shown so much resilience in the face of this devastation, with women and young people leading the rebuilding efforts.

Thanks to supporters like you, who were quick to respond to this emergency and the incredible work of our friends at the Emergency Action Alliance, we provided humanitarian aid to over 197,211 people.

After over 12 years of conflict, Syria remains one of the world's largest humanitarian crises.

The earthquakes further compounded an already dire crisis. Escalating the urgent need for shelter for displaced people, medical care, food, clean water and sanitation, and protection for women and girls exposed to gender-based violence.

Your generous gift helped our local partners:

- **Mobilise youth volunteers** to pull survivors from the rubble, reaching 6,330 people.
- **Provide urgent medical care** to more than 27,933 displaced people.
- **Distribute clean water, hygiene kits** and build washing facilities to over 37,667 people.
- **Ensure women and girls had access to private washing facilities** in 15 temporary camps, to reduce their risk of harassment or assault.
- **Set-up Mobile Mental Health units** which were a lifeline to hundreds of traumatised children living in remote areas.
- **Offer counselling and legal aid** to survivors of gender-based violence.



ActionAid partner, Violet, conducts distributions in Northwest Syria

## Case study

Jumana 11, has been given mental health support, comfort and advice around staying safe in the aftermath of the earthquake. Since the earthquake, Jumana has been unable to attend school. One day, Jumana wishes to become a doctor to help the children who were trapped under the rubble caused by the earthquake.



ActionAid's partner WEFAQ distributing hot food and fresh fruit and vegetables. Rafa, Gaza

## ActionAid's response in Gaza

Your support continues to help women affected by the devastating crisis in Gaza.

**ActionAid supporters like you have already donated over \$60,000** to help the thousands of people displaced in the conflict, and working with partners, over 70,000 Australians have signed our petition calling on Foreign Minister Penny Wong to support an immediate ceasefire.

The situation in Gaza remains dire, with **women and children making up 70% of those killed**. Food, water, fuel, and electricity are rapidly running out. The entire population is facing crisis due to the lack of food and water. Women are giving birth in unsterile conditions and without pain relief. Newborn babies cannot access medical care and without clean water, their mothers cannot produce enough milk to feed them.

Displaced women in Gaza are so desperate they are using pieces of the tents they rely on for shelter from the cold and rain as a substitute for period products. **Women are showing incredible resilience** and finding ways to manage their needs as best they can, but they shouldn't have to: it is a fundamental right for women to be able to manage their periods safely and with dignity.

Our partners in Gaza are supporting women and girls amid extremely challenging and dangerous conditions with your support.

**Thank you so much for your support as we continue our efforts to assist women and their families in Gaza living through this massive humanitarian catastrophe.**

You have:

- **Helped reach over 80,000 people** with humanitarian relief in Gaza.
- **Provided 15,590 people** with urgent food.
- **Distributed 13,700 hygiene kits** in January – which include tissues, toilet paper, soap, sanitary pads and wet wipes.
- **Constructed 60 toilets and shower blocks** in Rafah to provide women and girls with a safe private space to attend to their hygiene needs.
- **Provided 500 blankets** for displaced families along with additional clothing.



# From Brain Teasers to Change Makers: ActionAid's Arise Trivia Night Success

On November 2nd, ActionAid was hosted by Arise Leadership Circle Chair, Kristina Stefanova and Folonomo (For Love Not Money) to **an evening of intellect, delicious food, laughter and generosity, at the Arise Trivia Night.**

**Bec Charlwood**, our esteemed MC and quizmaster, **had us in stitches with her comedic flair and quick wit**, ensuring that the atmosphere was electric from start to finish.

As our guests enjoyed delicious food and drinks, generously provided to keep our brains fueled for the trivia challenges ahead, they also had the opportunity to bid on a fantastic array of prizes during our live auction.

**Every dollar raised during the event makes a significant impact, empowering women on the frontlines of humanitarian emergencies and fostering women's leadership** in countries such as Vanuatu, Kenya, Indonesia, and the Philippines. It's through events like these that we can truly make a difference in the lives of women and communities around the world.



Arise Leadership Circle Members with comedian Bec Charlwood

## Thank you for your support!

**The goal of the Arise movement is to empower one million women around the world to lead their communities in times of crisis.**

**ActionAid Australia**

1300 66 66 72

[supporter.au@actionaid.org](mailto:supporter.au@actionaid.org)

[actionaid.org.au](http://actionaid.org.au)

You are a vital part of this movement and together we are creating change in women's lives. Every time you donate to Arise, you empower women to transform their communities.

**DONATE HERE**

**arise** | **act:onaid**