

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

# **Arise Fund Impact Report 2025**



Over the past year, the global community has faced an unprecedented set of challenges.

From **rising conflicts and political instability, to devastating aid cuts and the escalating climate crisis** which is forging a devastating path for women on the frontlines. In the face of these intersecting crises, there's an ever increasing need for the Arise Fund.

In 2025 **we continued to resource women to play a crucial leadership role in emergencies, to ensure humanitarian assistance reaches the most vulnerable women and girls.**

Over the past year, the Arise Fund supported women in Vanuatu to lead a response to one of the worst earthquakes in the Pacific nation's history, as well as focusing on the protection of women's rights following the devastating Myanmar earthquake. In Gaza, our local partners endured unimaginable conditions to continue providing relief to women and their families in desperate need of food, clean water, shelter and medical care.

This urgent and immediate work was carried out alongside our **long-term investment in supporting women's leadership in adapting to climate change and preparing for disasters** in places such as Kenya, Bangladesh, Indonesia, the Philippines and with the Shifting the Power Coalition in the Pacific. This transformational work is not only making communities more resilient to climate change, but it's also **empowering women to make their voices heard and lead in their communities.**

We know that when women lead crisis response, communities are better prepared for disasters, more lives are saved, and women's position in society is transformed. That's why the Arise Fund aims to raise \$20 million to empower one million women around the world with the resources and networks to lead their communities in times of crisis.

Please join this movement and celebrate the astonishing work of local women leaders around the world.



**Kristina Stefanova**  
Chair  
Arise Leadership Circle

Cover: ActionAid has trained community counsellors in Northern Uganda, as part of the African Women's Voices for Peace program, to offer psychosocial support to their peers. *ActionAid*

## SINCE 2017



**23**

**countries we've  
worked in**



**4.4m**

**people reached**



**49,000**

**women trained to  
prepare for and lead  
disaster response**



**\$16.8m**

**funds raised**





WENet – ActionAid’s partner in the Philippines conducts training to ensure that women play a leading role in disaster preparedness and response. PKKK

# Partnering with women on the frontlines of crisis response

Together with the match funding from the Australian Government’s international development program, the Arise Fund supports multi-year programs around the world to advance women’s leadership in responding to climate change and protecting their rights in emergencies.

**Under the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP), for every \$1 contributed by donors through the Arise Fund, the Australian Government matches it with \$4.**

We are preparing women before disasters strike, so they can effectively lead their communities in an emergency – and as a result, save lives, build community resilience and drive gender equality.

# A movement of Ni-Vanuatu women leading disaster response

## Vanuatu

Vanuatu is one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world. Cyclones, earthquakes, floods and volcanic eruptions strike regularly, and climate change is making these events more frequent and severe.

Women often bear the brunt of these crises, with existing gender inequality, poverty, and violence amplifying during disasters. ActionAid is helping women lead their communities through these challenges. We provide training in disaster preparedness, climate leadership, and economic resilience. These programs give women the tools to protect their rights, earn an income, and shape response and recovery efforts. The *Women I Tok Tok Tugeta* (WITTT) network is central to this work.

Founded by ActionAid after Cyclone Pam, WITTT brings women together to learn about their rights, climate impacts, and government policy and decision-making processes. Today, the network has grown to 10,000 members, including more than 1,000 women with disabilities in the WITTT Sunshine disability chapter.

### 2024–25 Impact

- The **WITTT federation was formally launched** in a ceremony with Vanuatu's First Lady, the Vanuatu Minister for Climate Change, and the Australian and British High Commissioners. This milestone reflects the sustained efforts of Ni-Vanuatu women to promote women's leadership and decision-making in disaster preparedness and response.
- The Resilience Gardens project enabled **300 women farmers to cultivate essential crops** to feed their families, to sell at market to earn an income and to store for use in times of disaster.
- **Women with disabilities in Tanna and Erromango were trained in beekeeping** – an income-generating activity that also supports pollination and sustainable farming. Eight hives were installed, breaking gender norms in a male-dominated field.
- Women **led an inclusive earthquake response**, reaching more than 4,000 people.
- WITTT Sunshine coordinator Ellen Tamata now **contributes to national decision-making** as a member of the National Disability Committee.
- Women have reported a **reduction in gender-based violence** due to greater financial security and increased ability to feed their families.



# Women lighting the way in Lawital

In Vanuatu, up to 80% of the rural population lives without electricity. Ni-Vanuatu women have long called for access to the electrical grid – for cooking, for their children to do their homework, and for street lighting to improve safety. Through a partnership between ActionAid, the Australian Government, PowerWells and the *Women I Tok Tok Tugeta* (WITTT) network, an innovative rent-to-own program in the small village of Lawital in Tanna, Vanuatu is supporting women's leadership in bringing renewable energy to the community.

Women from the community have been trained on how to install and maintain the solar systems, including in times of emergency. When a disaster is on the horizon, such as a cyclone, women in the community know how to dismantle and safely store the solar systems, and to reinstall them following the emergency.

Local women have now installed solar systems in all 115 households in Lawital, as well as in public spaces. Already communities are reporting four to five hours of additional lighting every day that is increasing economic activity and safety in the community. Women's status in the community is also shifting as traditional male leaders recognise that women have brought electricity to the community.

The partnership is powering homes with clean energy – and improving women's health and safety, promoting digital inclusion and establishing a sustainable and scalable model. This project is part of the Australian Government's Pacific Climate Infrastructure Financing Partnership initiative.

Women in the village of Lawital, Vanuatu are leading the off-grid solar project in their community, having received training to install and maintain the solar systems in their homes and public spaces. *ActionAid*





# Shifting the power across the Pacific

Since 2016, ActionAid has supported Pacific Island women leaders at the forefront of disaster management, humanitarian response and climate action through the **Shifting the Power Coalition** – a coalition of 15 partner organisations across the Pacific.

ActionAid serves as the secretariat for the Coalition, which promotes diverse women's leadership in climate and humanitarian action, particularly young women and women with disabilities. Through training, mutual learning and grant funding, the Coalition is supporting women to lead in the traditionally male-dominated humanitarian space and to drive locally-led climate action.

A key focus of the Coalition has been piloting and strengthening women-led early warning systems in 4 countries, enabling communities to respond swiftly and effectively to disasters. Independent research conducted by the University of Technology Sydney found clear evidence of the effectiveness of these women-led, community based systems, which reach more than 2 million people across the Pacific. Women's increased access to information, knowledge of disaster risk and engagement in disaster planning are key outcomes.

Coalition partners were at the forefront of promoting early warning for all at the United Nations Global Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction in Geneva in June 2025, where the research findings were launched at a high level event with governments, UN agencies and civil society.

Another major focus for the Coalition over the past year has been resourcing young women's leadership on climate change, through the following initiatives.

## Tonga

The Talitha Project launched the Tonga Women Information Network for Disasters youth hub in Lapaha, engaging 28 young women as youth mentors. These mentors received disaster risk management training to lead preparedness, response, and recovery efforts in their communities. A youth mentor noted that the training “equipped me with a lot of knowledge and awareness ... safety is a result of being prepared. Every girl must always have a 72-hour emergency kit ready”.

## Papua New Guinea

In Papua New Guinea, the young women-led Hauskuk Initiative began establishing the *Raun Raun Toksave* early warning system in Madang Province. A workshop in April 2025 trained 50 participants, mostly young women, in disaster preparedness and response, empowering them to lead their community to build a more resilient future.

## Bougainville

Young women and women with disabilities from 13 districts in Bougainville participated in early warning training to establish phone trees and SMS blasts to alert communities to a disaster. Two radio campaigns were launched to promote women’s leadership in disaster preparedness.

## Fiji

Nine young women leaders participated in a two day intergenerational Talanoa Circle discussing climate justice, disaster preparedness and inclusive leadership, facilitated by Fiji partners, Transcend Oceania and the Fiji Disabled People’s Federation. The women built their capacity to lead disaster response efforts in their communities, with plans to share learnings with another 50 community members. Young women also developed recommendations to influence climate and disaster funding within the Fijian National Budget.

## Solomon Islands

A learning exchange took place with 30 young women, resulting in the women building raised garden beds in the flood-prone village of Lilisiana, benefitting more than 150 community members. The project is allowing women to lead practical strategies to address food insecurity caused by climate change, offering a sustainable solution for affected communities.

## Vanuatu

The *Women Wetem Weta* phone tree now engages women, including women with disabilities, across eight islands. The multi-hazard early warning system also delivers SMS blasts to 50% of Vanuatu. The Women Wetem Weta team work closely with the government through the National Emergency Operations Centre to disseminate accessible information for disaster preparedness and response, including during the 2024 Port Vila earthquake.

# Women leading inclusive climate justice

## Indonesia

In Indonesia's Central Sulawesi province, ActionAid's program for inclusive justice is **supporting the leadership of women, including young women and women with disabilities**, in responding to climate impacts.

This year the program supported women to influence village planning processes, resulting in three villages rolling out community action plans and gender-based violence case assistance. Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Task Forces were formed in all target villages, with trained paralegals providing GBV support and disability rights advocacy.

### 2024–25 Impact

- 340 women across six villages in Poso District are engaged in the program. More than 70 identified women's safety risks and engaged in advocacy to address these risks at a local level.
- 26 paralegals trained to provide **gender-based violence assistance** and advocate for disability rights.
- The program engaged in influencing the **national climate justice bill** through a paper promoting community-led protection and leadership models.
- 133 young people were trained in **integrated farming**, with more than 70 young women developing community action plans and driving sustainable livelihoods. Three livelihood groups were also formed, preparing partnerships with government and the private sector. These initiatives include seedling nurseries, waste processing, pig farming, and compost fertiliser production as locally driven innovations.



Women involved in ActionAid's WENet coalition attend training on gender-responsive participatory capacity and vulnerability assessment for local engagement. *ActionAid*



# Putting women at the centre of disaster plans in the typhoon belt

## The Philippines

In the Philippines, the **Women Leading Action for Gender-Responsive and Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change** project is implemented by the Women in Emergencies Network (WENet) – a coalition of local women-led organisations, the set up which was supported by ActionAid in 2014.

This project puts women at the centre of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation by promoting feminist leadership, young women's engagement and building practical skills.

The Philippines is one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world, and it sits along the typhoon belt. Climate change has meant the risk of disaster has increased dramatically – in late 2024, the Philippines was hit by six typhoons in just one month, impacting over 13 million people and overwhelming government response systems. With years of training and experience gained through this program, WENet was ready to respond in a way that saved lives and built community resilience.

### 2024–25 Impact

- WENet members have **influenced disaster planning** in 22 communities and disaster policies in four provinces to be more gender responsive.
- Partners have formed **partnerships among women's organisations and local government units** to strengthen the protection of women's rights in emergencies.
- WENet training has **equipped women to participate in disaster response and climate change planning** in their local community, and bring a gender lens into these discussions. 700 women have been trained over the past year in women's rights in disasters and climate resilience.
- Women have **led emergency responses to typhoons, droughts and oil spills**, and brought targeted relief that meets the needs of women in affected communities. This included food relief, dignity kits and livelihood support to 3300 people over the past year.

# Building stronger livelihoods in the face of the climate crisis

## Kenya

Since 2022, the **Gender Responsive Alternatives to Climate Change (GRACC)** project in Kenya is empowering women in regions where climate change has impacted women's livelihoods, safety and rights due to erratic rainfall and persistent drought.

The project has equipped women, including women with disabilities, with skills to develop sustainable, climate resilient livelihoods in response to the worsening climate crisis.

### 2024–25 Impact

Over the past year, the project made significant strides in strengthening women's voices, collective power, and economic resilience.

- More than 1,100 women are now practising **improved pasture management and adopting agroecology**.
- 700 women participated in **climate change planning committees** – resulting in them influencing how local funds are spent for the response to climate change. 60 women with disabilities participated in **local budget processes** to promote funding for their services and needs in the community.
- 35 women with disabilities received **drought tolerant goats** as a way of increasing their income through sales of milk and cheese at local markets. These goats have given birth to an additional 40 goats which have been shared with other community members to replicate these outcomes even further.
- Four women attended the first National Agroecology Symposium where they contributed their project knowledge to advocate for equitable and locally led climate finance, as well as women's role in agroecology and sustainable food systems.

# Women leading climate resilience in Kenya

In the semi-arid landscapes of Makueni County, Kenya, 41-year-old Ruth Matheka has felt the devastating impacts of climate change that have long shaped the lives of rural communities. But through ActionAid's Gender Responsive Alternatives to Climate Change program, new hope is emerging.

Before undertaking training with ActionAid, Ruth struggled to feed her family. Her husband was the sole breadwinner, while she attempted to grow crops that would often wither weeks after the rain stopped. School fees were a constant challenge, and sometimes her children would miss weeks of education.

That changed when Ruth worked with ActionAid to become one of 45 local trainers trained in agroecology and pasture management. Together, these trainers have since reached 225 community members with the knowledge and techniques to adapt to changing climate conditions.

On her five-acre farm, she now practices agroecology, which emphasises crop diversity, integrated pest management, and soil moisture retention techniques. Her farm produces pigeon peas, vegetables, pawpaw, indigenous trees, and bottle gourds, a traditional crop with multiple uses, from nutrition to utensils. She has also established a fruit and indigenous tree nursery, which she sells to generate extra income.

One of the biggest surprises came when Ruth began selling pasture grass grown for her animals. Her first sale earned her enough money to buy a cow. "I never imagined grass could be that profitable," she said proudly.

Ruth's transformation has also inspired others. As a member of a women's group, she shares her knowledge by training fellow women in tree nursery establishment and pasture management.

She was honored to represent her community at the 1st Agroecology Symposium in Nairobi, where she connected with farmers from across the country, viewed a wide variety of seeds, and engaged with policymakers. From this experience, she plans to help her group establish a local seed bank.

"This is a rare opportunity for rural women," she said. "But the project made it possible. It gave me a new beginning. We are no longer helpless, we have knowledge, resources, and resilience."

Ruth Matheka has developed multiple income streams and is training other women in community on sustainable farming practices, following training from ActionAid. *ActionAid*





# African women shaping peacebuilding post-conflict

## Great Lakes Africa

In the conflict-affected Great Lakes region of Africa, women have long borne the brunt of violence, displacement, and trauma – yet their voices are often excluded from peace, security, and justice processes.

The **African Women's Voices for Peace project**, supported by the Australian Government and the Judith Neilson Foundation, is changing that.

Since its inception two years ago, it has supported over 2,000 women to heal, rebuild, and lead peace building efforts, strengthening their capacity to influence decisions that shape their futures.

Across Kenya, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Ethiopia, ActionAid is training women in leadership, advocacy and gender perspectives on peace and security, strengthening their ability to contribute to peacebuilding efforts in their region.

Some women who initially lacked confidence have now emerged as vocal advocates in resolving community conflict in their communities. These individuals have independently initiated dialogue sessions and mobilised others to participate in peacebuilding and local governance forums.

## 2024–25 Impact

- More than **120 women were trained in counselling skills** and have delivered specialised trauma counselling already to 96 women in the community who have experienced gender-based violence.
- Women from conflict affected communities were able to bring their lived experience to regional and global events on Women, Peace and Security (WPS). A **peace forum was also established to meet quarterly** ensuring WPS issues are discussed and addressed through collaboration.
- Women suffering injuries from conflict and war received specialist care to heal and rebuild their lives through a partnership established with a local hospital.
- 93 leaders (**including 76 women and people with disabilities**) across three communities in Uganda participated in WPS training sessions to integrate these principles into the work in their own communities.
- 139 leaders (**including 118 women and people with disabilities**) from organisations in Uganda and Kenya were trained in advocacy, engagement in peace talks and participation in national planning bodies. This has led to their inclusion in community level peace committees.
- Women have reported increased confidence, personal healing and active involvement in conflict mediation and peer counselling.

# Strengthening women's climate resilience in coastal communities

## Bangladesh

The PRAGATI project – **Promoting Resilience and Gender-Responsive Adaptation for Transformative Impact** – was implemented in June 2024 in Satkhira, a coastal district in south-west Bangladesh vulnerable to climate change.

In a region where traditional agricultural practices are increasingly unsustainable due to salinity, waterlogging and extreme weather, the project is focused on empowering women through climate-resilient sustainable agriculture, inclusive disaster preparedness and economic empowerment.

The project prioritises gender-responsive approaches to ensure participation of marginalised groups such as female-headed households and women with disabilities. This is particularly important in a context where only one in five women actively participate in community decision-making. Women also have limited awareness of climate-resilient livelihoods and constrained access to financial services, leaving them dependent on high-interest loans in order to adapt.

### 2024–25 Impact

- 500 women including women with disabilities, have been trained in **climate-resilient sustainable agriculture** and adaptive crop management.
- With business training and support to establish a village savings and loan scheme, **31 women have now established micro businesses**.
- **Seven women are now in leadership roles** with the Local Advisory Committee for Climate Action when previously there were none.
- Essential access to protection and health services have improved with **350 women attending gender-based violence protection sessions** and a further 167 accessing midwifery care.
- Over **800 women attended awareness sessions** to build knowledge on climate, economic and gender-related issues.
- A **community seed bank** has been established with 49 contributors, ensuring the community is better prepared to recover when the next climate disaster strikes.
- 25 women, including women with disabilities, were trained in **women-led early warning preparedness and response**.

# Putting women at the centre of emergency response

Despite being disproportionately impacted by disasters, women's leadership in times of crisis still goes unrecognised and under resourced. And yet, when disasters strike, women are the first to take action, often putting their lives on the line to protect others.

When a woman is placed at the centre of emergency response, she builds resilience for herself and her community, the capability to defend her rights, and leadership skills that last a lifetime. The Arise Fund drives ActionAid's pioneering women-led humanitarian work, which recognises and supports women's leadership during crisis.

ActionAid and the *Women I Tok Tok Tugeta* network immediately launched an emergency response following the earthquake in December 2024. *ActionAid*





# Vanuatu earthquake

On 17 December 2024, Vanuatu was struck by two powerful earthquakes within 24 hours. The strongest, a magnitude 7.3, caused widespread destruction and triggered landslides across the island nation. Lives were lost and 80,000 people were affected along with many being displaced. The earthquake followed three destructive cyclones in 2023, pushing the people of Vanuatu into an almost perpetual state of crisis response and recovery.

Women with disabilities were at the forefront of ActionAid's women-led and inclusive humanitarian response, which prioritises outreach to people with disabilities, widows and single mothers.

The relief effort delivered fresh vegetables and root crops grown through women's resilience gardens, provided 14 villages with clean water, and distributed dignity kits to some of the most vulnerable women in the community.

Trauma counselling was a core element to ActionAid's response, with 28 women trained to deliver mental health support to over 360 people throughout the community.

ActionAid's emergency response had a long-lasting impact following the earthquake. Before the crisis there was no WITTT network chapter in Port Vila, but because of the powerful engagement with women in the community during the crisis, a Port Vila chapter has since been established. This significant milestone will allow ActionAid and the WITTT network to amplify its impact in Vanuatu's capital city.

**1,424**

affected Ni-Vanuatu women across seven communities were consulted and guided the earthquake response



**369**

women with disability received vital support

**4,000**

people received food assistance

**500**

women received dignity kits



ActionAid's women-led emergency response to the Vanuatu earthquake had a focus on supporting women, including women with disabilities, with food, clean water and hygiene kits. *ActionAid*



# Myanmar earthquake

A devastating 7.7 magnitude earthquake struck central Myanmar in March 2025, claiming approximately 4,000 lives and impacting millions more, striking a country already under immense pressure from an enduring civil war. Following the earthquake, ActionAid was among the first responders and immediately activated a humanitarian response supporting women's leadership and local communities to respond.

In those critical first days, ActionAid's partners reached families who had lost everything, providing them with urgent food assistance,

baby formula, clean water, hygiene kits and medical supplies. The response team also supported the building of new shelters as a major protection threat for women forced to live under a tarpaulin.

During emergencies, women always face additional challenges. In the Inle Lake region, entire families were crammed onto boats following the earthquake, forcing women to manage their periods with no toilets or sanitary products, in close quarters with men – a deeply distressing situation in a society where menstruation is heavily stigmatised.

Women also face increased insecurity and risk of violence during emergencies. The response prioritises creating safe spaces for women to access gender-based violence services and mental health care, as well as obtain dignity kits.

Through swift action and a deep commitment to protecting women's rights in emergencies, ActionAid and its local partners not only delivered life-saving aid following the earthquake but also restored dignity and hope for communities rebuilding, after unimaginable loss.

**13,173**

people received food



**10,734**

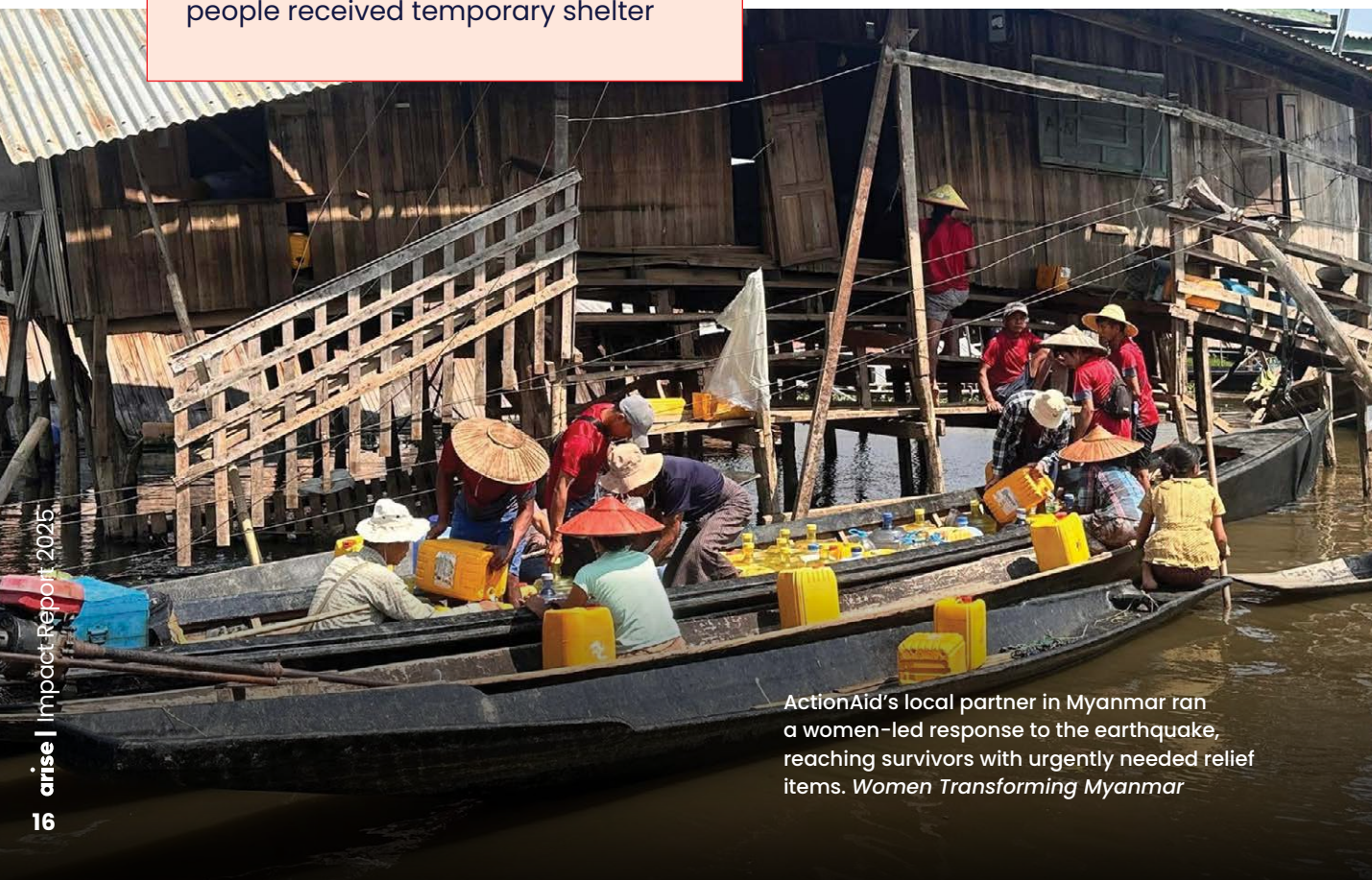
people received safe water and access to sanitation facilities

**250**

pregnant and lactating mothers received cash assistance

**830**

people received temporary shelter



ActionAid's local partner in Myanmar ran a women-led response to the earthquake, reaching survivors with urgently needed relief items. *Women Transforming Myanmar*

# Gaza crisis

Since October 2023, ActionAid has provided humanitarian relief to Palestinian women and their families in Gaza, who continue to face catastrophic conditions – a situation our partners have described as “hell on earth”. More than 60,000 people have been killed under bombardment by the Israeli military, amidst destruction of medical services and infrastructure.

Restrictions on aid access has resulted in starvation, malnutrition, and disease, with famine confirmed in Gaza City. Despite the significant challenges, women-led partners supported by ActionAid have been working throughout the crisis to provide food, clean water, hygiene kits, shelter items, protection services, and psychosocial support. With the aid blockade significantly compromising humanitarian efforts, ActionAid’s local partners relied on local markets within Gaza to purchase food and relief items.

Amid the devastation, ActionAid continues to support the Women’s Health Centre in Khan Younis, which helps 250 people daily with general medicine, women’s health care, wound dressing, medications and lab tests.

Additionally, ActionAid’s partner hospital Al-Awda Hospital in Nuseirat has supported mothers and newborn babies facing malnutrition. Al-Awda Hospital works to treat these infants despite limited resources, providing available milk, nutritional supplements, and guidance to families, with the ultimate goal of restoring children’s health and giving them a chance at recovery in the face of crisis.

## From January–June 2025:

**2,208**

people reached with shelter assistance



**4,639**

people received blankets and clothing

**30,905**

people received life saving hot meals, food parcels and vegetables

**5,310**

people received hygiene kits



ActionAid’s partner in Gaza, Wefaq Society for Women and Child Care, prepare and distribute fresh vegetables for people suffering from critical food shortages and soaring prices. *ActionAid*



**The Arise Fund's ambition is to raise \$20 million to empower one million women around the world with the resources and networks they need to lead their communities in times of crisis.**

Members of WENet in the Philippines prepare emergency relief items for distribution, in response to a powerful typhoon that impacted millions of people. *LILAK* (Purple Action for Indigenous Women's Rights)



## Thank you

On behalf of all of us at ActionAid, thank you for your incredible generosity this year.

### Individuals

J A Donald Family  
The Herschell family  
Kristina Stefanova and James Schultz  
Harriet Pratten  
Chapman Eastway Charitable Foundation

### Trusts & Foundations

Australian-Palestinian Partnerships in Education and Health  
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Pacific Development and Conservation Trust  
The Skrzynski Foundation  
The Roberts Pike Foundation

### Organisations

Hall & Wilcox  
MECCA M-POWER  
Emergency Action Alliance

### Ambassadors

Natasha Stott Despoja

## Arise Leadership Circle

The Arise Leadership Circle is a group of incredible women leaders who are committed to transformational change for women across the world.

Angela Priestley, Founding Editor of Women's Agenda

Arielle Gamble, CEO and Co-founder of Groundswell Giving

Anna Demant, Principal at First Tier Media

Asha Kayla, Former Head of Sustainable Impact at Woolworths Group

Emily Albert, Head of Impact at Alberts

Janette O'Neill, Partner and Chief Sustainability Officer at PwC

Jo Norman, Philanthropy Manager at Norman Family Foundation

Kristina Stefanova (Chair), Co-founder of Bundaleer Sustainable Investments

Lauren Hicks, Head of Social Impact at QBE Insurance

Michelle Higelin, Executive Director of ActionAid Australia

Nicola Blackburn, Philanthropy Advisor

Sarah Morton-Ramwell, Partner and Global Head of Pro Bono and Corporate Responsibility at Ashurst

## Australian Aid program



Together, the Australian Aid Program and The Arise Fund are supporting multi-year projects in Bangladesh, Philippines, Kenya, Uganda, the Pacific and Indonesia to advance women's leadership in responding to climate change and disasters and protect their rights in emergencies.

**Every dollar contributed by donors through the Arise Fund is matched by the Australia Government with four dollars through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program.**



Women leading  
crisis response.

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