

WOMEN'S MOVEMENT BUILDING

ACTIONAID'S SUPPORT FOR THE MOBILISATION OF WOMEN AND GIRLS AROUND THE WORLD

Every day, millions of women and girls around the world face injustice, violence and discrimination – simply because of their gender. Yet, women and girls are mobilising. They know the changes they want and have solutions. ActionAid works directly with women's and girls' groups, and whole communities to address the root causes, and respond to the consequences of poverty and injustice. We have a long tradition of movement building, with grassroots organising and direct-action at its core. Our **human rights-based approach** empowers women to understand their rights, and combines change at the community level with policy action - because we know that for women to claim their rights, we **need to change the unjust policies and practices that make people poor.**

ACTIONAID'S GLOBAL FEMINIST CAMPAIGN FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE

ActionAid is revolutionising its fight for climate justice with a new five-year campaign, launched in September 2023. Through research and storytelling, and working in partnership with women and girls globally, we will tackle head on the two main causes of global warming – **fossil fuels** and **agribusiness** – and the investors who bankroll them. We know that women bring vital skills, resources and experience to campaigning work, and millions are already demonstrating the sustainable alternatives to harmful agricultural practices. Through powerful campaigning, in partnership with the women and girls most affected by climate change, we will start to push billions of funding out of fossil fuel and agricultural climate crimes and into projects that will move the planet towards a sustainable and just.

Our campaign goal consists of three key pillars:

1. **Cut off funding for fossil fuels and industrial agriculture.** Governments, banks and pension funds must cut off funding to fossil fuels, and carbon intensive agriculture.
2. **Fund sustainable women-led green alternatives** that benefit both people and planet, such as agroecology.
3. **Scale up women's movements for a just, green and feminist future.** This campaign will build on existing networks, movements and agencies, and organise new constituencies, while prioritising the leadership of women and young people in climate-vulnerable communities.

ActionAid's current ten-year global strategy sets out the importance of people's power and local action taken to shift power and produce system change. Women, farmers, indigenous people and young people are not only self-organising in every corner of the world to build resilience against the climate crisis but also urgently making the case for those in power to change the rules of the game that is destroying our planet. Many of these actions remain unseen by the majority, ignored by public debates and disconnected to one another.

ActionAid works with local women activists and Women's Rights Organisations to defend communities threatened by agribusiness and fossil fuel projects. **We will connect Climate Defenders activists across borders to organise their communities, join up with other movements, speak at international climate events and directly with institutions bankrolling harmful practices.** Together we will mobilise against the world's biggest investors – pressuring them to divest from harmful projects and invest in sustainable women-led alternatives.



GIRL-LED RESEARCH AND ACTION

In 2020 - 2021, ActionAid conducted a girl-led research project called *Building Power Together* that looked at the realities and impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic facing adolescent girls aged 13 to 19 years old in **Bangladesh, Ethiopia** and **Indonesia**. The research focused on five areas of the girls' lives: freedom from violence; health and wellbeing; education and life-skills; economic rights; and girls in decision-making and crisis response. The project used a power framework and a participatory approach throughout to understand how inequalities girls face are structured and sustained, as well as opportunities for power to be built both individually and collectively to challenge inequalities and shift power to girls. Girls were partners in the whole research cycle, and were supported to draw up recommendations and identify opportunities to call for change. The research findings and recommendations for governments, donors, organisations and community members can be found [here](#).

97% of the girls who took part in the research reported believing more strongly in girls' power to make positive change in their communities and girls' greater power when they come together.

Using the research findings, at the **local** level, girls have been able to challenge their families, communities, and decision makers on the key issues raised using posters and communications materials and through community events. At the **national** level, girls have used the findings to challenge key stakeholders. For example, a girl researcher in Bangladesh took part in the International Girl Child event in October 2022, and publicly challenged the Minister of Education to provide free sanitary products in all schools, and raise awareness of sexual reproductive health rights.

Following the research project, ActionAid received additional funding to support the girls research groups in Bangladesh and Ethiopia to implement actions to address the priority issues raised. In Bangladesh, girls are focusing on activities to improve access to sexual and reproductive health rights, menstrual hygiene and mental health services; and in Ethiopia, the girls decided to focus on awareness raising campaigns on gender-based violence, and training for girls to challenge stakeholders on addressing gender-based violence. These activities will target local stakeholders and governments and will take place between April 2023 and March 2024. Building on the successes of this work, we recently secured further funding to conduct similar girl-led research projects in **Nigeria** and **Sierra Leone** over the next two years.

With further funding, we seek to scale up girl-led advocacy at local, national and international level on issues identified by girls in phase one and two. Further funding will enable girls to challenge decision makers on areas that they prioritise, and will enable ActionAid to take forward this work with girls at a global level.



WOMEN, PEACE AND JUSTICE PLATFORM IN THE GREAT LAKES REGION

ActionAid works directly with women's and girls' organisations across the world to support them to claim their rights. As a part of this agenda, ActionAid is supporting the growth of a **new platform connecting women's rights organisations (WROs) promoting women's rights, peacebuilding, justice and conflict work in Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).**



Earlier this year, a workshop on Women, Peace and Justice was held in Uganda. Organised by ActionAid Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya and DRC with technical and financial assistance from ActionAid Australia, the workshop brought together leading WROs and frontline organisations from each country working on women's rights, peacebuilding, justice and conflict, including women who have survived the harshest impacts of conflict, war and patriarchy.

These WROs work at the local and national levels, often leveraging extremely limited budgets to create significant impact. At the national level, they use their policy and advocacy experience to bring rights violations of women and girls to the attention of national leaders. Their achievements include sit-ins in parliament to meet the Speaker of the House and pushing for the Minister for Justice to meet survivors of conflict, including survivors of sexual violence.

The WROs have just established a pioneering regional platform to unite their work, initially focusing on the Great Lakes Region with Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya and DRC, with the intention to expand across Sub-Saharan Africa in due course. The purpose of the platform would be threefold.

1. To create a space to **share experiences of women and girls living in and affected by conflict** across contexts that share similarities but that are also distinct and unique.
2. To **build solidarity and power to advocate** for each other's causes, especially where women may not be safe to make statements about their conditions.
3. To **enable members to conduct advocacy work and cultivate women's leadership** at the regional and international levels. At the regional level, they intend to engage and conduct advocacy with the African Union, while at the international level, they intend to attend events such as the Women, Peace and Security week in New York City to highlight conflict and its impact on women and girls.

The platform would therefore support systemic change at every level.

The collective vision of the platform is for full ownership to sit with the member WROs, while ActionAid will host the platform, providing support, infrastructure and fundraising. ActionAid is seeking partners to support this new platform to help it meet its ambitious goals.



Poster produced by feminist artist Maitree Muzumdar to highlight issues raised by girls in Indonesia.



WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND JUSTICE NATIONAL COALITION – ETHIOPIA

In Ethiopia, amplifying the voice of women as economic actors and securing economic justice is a core focus of ActionAid's strategy. At the **community level**, ActionAid works to build resilient livelihoods for women including through women's saving and credit cooperatives, which successfully support women to access greater income generating opportunities and influence decisions that affect their households and communities. However, the current policy on establishing saving and credit cooperatives in Ethiopia restricts women's ability to set up cooperatives without men's involvement. In order to challenge this, ActionAid held a high-level **national dialogue** in collaboration with Ethiopian Ministry of Women and Social Affairs and UN Women on addressing the barriers facing women-only and women-led cooperatives, and a task force has been established.

ActionAid Ethiopia also established the **Women's Economic Empowerment and Justice National Coalition** of civil society organisations to further strategic advocacy and communications on women's economic empowerment. In partnership with Civil Society Academy Africa, the coalition has assessed the Ethiopian women's economic empowerment framework, delivered training in transformative feminist leadership and advocacy strategy development, and cascaded the training to civil society organisations at the sub-regional level.

ActionAid is also working to improve coordination and accelerate the pace of women's economic empowerment in the country through the National Women's Economic Empowerment Forum which we set up in 2022, in partnership with the Ethiopian Ministry of Women and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Labour and Skills, the Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Associations, and UN Women.

At the **international level**, the national advocacy strategy produced by the Women's Economic Empowerment and Justice National Coalition has been promoted at the **WeProsper Global Coalition for Women's Economic Empowerment**– of which ActionAid is a member.

ActionAid is seeking funds to scale up our advocacy work to realise the policy amendment that will enable women to establish their own saving and credit cooperatives.



SUPPORTING GARMENT WORKERS TO REALISE THEIR RIGHTS THROUGH WORKERS' RIGHTS CAFES

ActionAid has been supporting workers, factories and communities for 40 years, affecting change from the bottom up. We have a unique approach to working with garment workers through our innovative '**Workers' Cafe**' model. Workers' Cafes are safe spaces for garment workers, mostly women, to learn about their rights and entitlements in the workplace to hold duty bearers to account, and to support each other. They are situated in communities next to factories and aim to reach the poorest and most marginalised workers.

Our Workers' Cafes empower women workers to understand their workplace rights, access advisory and legal services, take part in training, unite with peers and collectively campaign for change at the factory level.

The Cafes also support women to share knowledge and work with other groups to advocate for improved legislation and programmes at the national level. The model has supported women to successfully lobby factory management on improved working conditions and entitlements – for example, securing maternity and sick leave, improved toilet facilities and canteens.

In India, ActionAid supported the creation of a country level workers' platform, called the 'Working People's Charter', comprised of trade union representatives from various sectors and industries. ActionAid has been actively advocating for legislation that improves workers' rights through this platform.

We also work closely with **industry bodies** where possible, and ensuring **International Labour Organisation** (ILO) guidelines are adhered to is a key aspect of our advocacy work. For example, in Bangladesh in 2019, advocacy efforts through our Workers' Cafes successfully resulted in amendments to the 2006 Labour Law as well as more coherent labour laws and policies in line with ILO conventions.

ActionAid has similar programmes supporting garment workers in Vietnam, Cambodia, Bangladesh and India. ActionAid also works in other commodity supply chains. Additional funding can help us scale up this work.



Workers' Café in Dhaka, Bangladesh

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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