

Action

Changing the world
with **women and girls**
act:onaid

**STAND
WITH
WOMEN**

**STANDING
WITH WOMEN:**

On the frontline
of the fight against
coronavirus

Issue 18 Autumn 2020

Women carry their Covid-19 relief packages as they prepare to return to their homes in Nigeria.

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Photo credit: Etinosa Yvonne/ActionAid

Welcome to your Autumn 2020 edition of *Action* magazine!

The ongoing coronavirus pandemic has had a harsh impact on women and girls in the world's poorest countries. Poverty has increased due to economic fallout, women have been disproportionately thrust onto the frontline, and there has been erosion of hard-won progress on women's rights and equality.

That's why ActionAid has chosen this moment to launch our new **Stand With Women** campaign. Now more than ever it is critical the world understands that solidarity with women and girls is the most important action we can take to bring about a safer and more equitable future for all.

As you read this issue, I hope you will reflect on the need to stand with women all over the world, and on the impact you are having by doing so. Together we can bring hope into these dark times.

Thank you, from the bottom of my heart, for everything you have given to help make this work possible. From supporting our coronavirus appeal, to buying Gifts in Action for your loved ones or raising funds from your homes, it all adds up. Your dedication and commitment has inspired our staff, partners and everybody involved with the work of ActionAid to continue in these challenging times - so thank you!



Girish Menon
Chief Executive

 @GirishMenonAAUK

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Cover photo credit: Fabeha Monir/ActionAid
Amina, 20, makes PPE masks as part of ActionAid's response, at the Rohingya camp in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh.

FIGHTING THE PANDEMIC...TOGETHER

How do you combat a global crisis? You work locally.

Throughout the coronavirus pandemic, the generosity of supporters like you has enabled ActionAid to deliver urgently needed relief to the most vulnerable people in the world's poorest countries.

Our response has seen us taking action in 40 countries, with ActionAid staff and volunteers working tirelessly to keep people safe. In July we also took part in a Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) appeal that raised more than £22 million which will be distributed across 14 charities including ActionAid. We are hugely grateful to everyone who kindly donated. Here are just a few of the places where your generosity has had an impact:

Brazil

Brazil has been one of the countries hit hardest by the pandemic. ActionAid has been working with partners to raise awareness about coronavirus. We have been distributing food packages to the most vulnerable people, particularly those in urban areas which have been more affected by the virus due to population density.



© Rushdi Sara/ActionAid

Occupied Palestine Territory (OPT)

For those living in the Gaza Strip, supplies were hard enough to come by before lockdown began. Once the pandemic hit and food became even more scarce, ActionAid teams went straight to work. We have supported hundreds of families in the most impoverished areas.

Afghanistan

In remote areas of Afghanistan, ActionAid is raising awareness of key behaviours to help stop the spread, including hand washing, wearing masks and social distancing.



© Maini Khairi/ActionAid

Nepal

ActionAid has deep roots in Nepal. When the pandemic struck, we began mobilising and training our volunteers, as well as identifying populations most in need of help, such as pregnant women, nursing mothers and people with disabilities. As well as delivering food and Covid-19 prevention kits, we have also worked to stop the spread by providing reliable information and advice.



© Sabina Shrestha/ActionAid

Ghana

Ghana has seen over 9,000 cases of Covid-19. ActionAid has been distributing relief to sponsored children and their families in the country, in the form of packs that provide essentials for the family for a month.



© Geoffrey Buta/ActionAid

Cambodia

ActionAid Cambodia has been carrying out the vital work of supporting families affected by the pandemic. This has included delivery of essential food packages containing up to a month's worth of supplies and the promotion of hygiene practices that stop the virus.



© Sar Pisey, Krong Chanthou/ActionAid

Together we are saving lives and protecting communities.

The DEC brings together 14 leading UK aid charities to raise funds quickly and efficiently, enabling us to rapidly scale up our operations on the ground in Somaliland, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and the DRC.



Nihinlola (Lola) Ayanda, ActionAid Communications Coordinator.

Q&A WITH LOLA AYANDA

One of the women leading our virus response in Nigeria

Women and girls often suffer the most during emergencies, but as Lola Ayanda – a Communications Coordinator for ActionAid – told us, nothing could prepare her for the Covid-19 pandemic. A former radio DJ, Lola works with marginalised women and girls in some of Nigeria’s most remote communities.

Q: What do you remember about the start of the pandemic?

Like most people, the closest I have ever come to a pandemic was through films or books. My colleagues and

I followed the media reports [about coronavirus], and at first, we weren’t worried. We thought that Nigeria would use lessons learnt from the Ebola crisis to tackle the pandemic. But within weeks, the numbers of infected people continued to grow rapidly.

Q: What was your role in combatting the spread of the virus?

Soon after the pandemic broke out, I was deployed to distribute life-saving information, food and hygiene kits. It was gut wrenching. Although the

car was loaded with our personal protective equipment (PPE) and I knew all the steps to take, I could not help thinking of all the frontline workers who had caught the virus.

“Some people we helped believed drinking warm water or bleach could fend off Covid-19.”

Q: What challenges did you face in keeping people safe?

Some of the remote communities do not have electricity, water, or health centres. Many Nigerians have no access to the internet and are unaware of vital coronavirus information. This makes the spread of misinformation one of the biggest immediate dangers for us.

Q: How did you combat this misinformation?

We worked to demonstrate handwashing and dispel dangerous myths. Some believed that drinking warm water or bleach could strengthen your immune system. One lady I spoke to told me that “the virus only affects sinners” so she thought she was immune.

Q: How has the pandemic affected women in your country?

Women in the world’s poorest countries are more exposed to the virus because of the roles they typically take on, like serving as healthcare workers. Not only this,

but Covid-19 has caused a significant surge in domestic violence around the world. Despite these facts the Nigerian government excluded The Ministry of Women’s Affairs from its task force coordinating the Covid-19 response. The exclusion of women in the fight against the virus remains a battle from the top and this makes ActionAid’s approach working with local female leaders even more vital.

Q: How are you personally coping with lockdown?

It has been a totally different way of working. It was my birthday recently and I thought I would have a quiet celebration, but my colleagues, family and friends managed to make me smile with many virtual hugs, songs and kisses. I hope we will get to hug, shake hands and be merry together again soon.

ActionAid has now reached 2,027 households with food parcels across 70 communities in Nigeria.



Distribution of food parcels in Abuja, Nigeria.

DRIVING CHANGE:

Women in India lead the fight against Covid-19

You might recall that we have written to you in the past about the amazing Gauravi Centre in Bhopal, India – a place where women who have experienced abuse and violence have been able to rebuild their lives and begin new chapters. Some have achieved financial independence by training as e-rickshaw (or *tuk-tuk*) drivers.

But when Covid-19 and lockdown hit, this work took on a fresh urgency.

Almost overnight, the Centre became a hub for coronavirus relief efforts, and women became frontline volunteers in the fight against this deadly disease. Seeing a dire need for help among the city's most vulnerable populations, the Gauravi Centre opened a community kitchen. Staff teamed up with 17 other organisations to deliver rations and sanitation kits to marginalised groups – including sex workers, Muslim minorities, homeless people and other minority populations – as well as continuing its core work with domestic violence survivors.

Laxmi is one of the volunteers who are tirelessly supporting this herculean effort.

“Gauravi has been a constant support in my life,” she says. “My daughter has special needs. She is unable to walk. Gauravi got her admitted in a centre that provides therapy for children with disabilities. They also counselled my husband before I took e-rickshaw training. Earlier, he was not supporting me to start this, but with regular counselling he was happy with me taking on this profession.”

Staff and volunteers like Laxmi are delivering up to 7,000 food packets for families in need each day, so safety is a major priority. “I wear a mask when I drive,” Laxmi says.

Once Laxmi was trained as an e-rickshaw driver, she bought her own vehicle, with the help of a loan secured by the Gauravi Centre. She delivers ration kits to members of her community, but most of her work entails driving Gauravi staff and volunteers to and from the Centre. Lockdown has made commuting in Bhopal almost impossible, so without Laxmi, many workers would be unable to get to Gauravi at all – her work is absolutely critical to keep the Centre operating.

“I was also told the guidelines of safety. I try to tell people in my community about health and safety that I learned from Gauravi.”

Laxmi

Laxmi is an e-rickshaw driver for Gauravi One-Stop Bhopal.

CHILD SPONSORSHIP

Keeping the Connection

The coronavirus pandemic has been a stressful and frightening time for many children around the world – adults too, in fact!

Although this situation has had an impact on many countries' postal delivery services, it has been amazing to see letters and messages of support and solidarity being sent.

Here is just a small collection (reproduced with permission) of the letters and artworks that have been sent by Child Sponsors during lockdown, alongside photos of support from sponsored children.



Messages of solidarity arrived from sponsored children in Sierra Leone.

Shathi, a sponsored child from Bangladesh, was helped by ActionAid in preparing her family home for cyclone Amphan that hit the community in May 2020.



Myla, from one of our child sponsorship families, sent this drawing to Prencence in Democratic Republic of Congo, the child her family sponsors.

"Hope gives happiness! Be hopeful for a better tomorrow." spelt out by sponsored children in Nepal.



Inspired by these messages? Want to learn more about Child Sponsorship through ActionAid? Please visit [actionaid.org.uk/sponsor-a-child](https://www.actionaid.org.uk/sponsor-a-child) today.

Antonia (right) is a member of an ActionAid Women's group in Brazil.



Taking care of bees-ness

All over the world women, families and communities who depend on agriculture for a living are finding new ways to be sustainable and earn a livelihood.

Many farmers are struggling to make ends meet using traditional farming, particularly with the growing impact of climate change. Others are simply looking to supplement their incomes. Whatever the reason, more and more people are turning to honey production, and ActionAid supporters are helping them get started.

Antônia, Brazil

Antônia and her husband Florêncio began cultivating bees when they were already in their sixties. The bees have now become not only the family's main means of livelihood but also the community's: they produce about 10 tons of honey per year. Along with other local projects undertaken by ActionAid, this income has transformed many of her neighbours' lives.

Did you know you can help people and communities in Kenya with the gift of beekeeping, through our Gifts in Action programme. Find out more at: giftsinaction.org.uk



“When I started working with bees, my husband was against it. He was afraid that the bees would kill the goats and chickens. But I didn't listen to him, because he was still learning about the importance of apiculture. When my husband saw how much money I was making from the honey, he changed his mind. Then I realised that if you start to understand how it works, you must lead the way. We become the example to bring the ones that still don't have the knowledge.”

Birhane, Ethiopia

Birhane came to beekeeping through an unusual route. For ten years she was a traditional circumciser, performing female genital mutilation (FGM) on the girls in her community. This was accepted as normal practice, and so she did not question it. Then

she joined a Women Watch group, set up by ActionAid Ethiopia. These groups were established to change harmful traditions and prevent violence against women.

“Now I have joined this group, I have learned that [FGM] has high impact on the health of girls. As a result, I have saved 15 children from that terrible harmful traditional practice.”

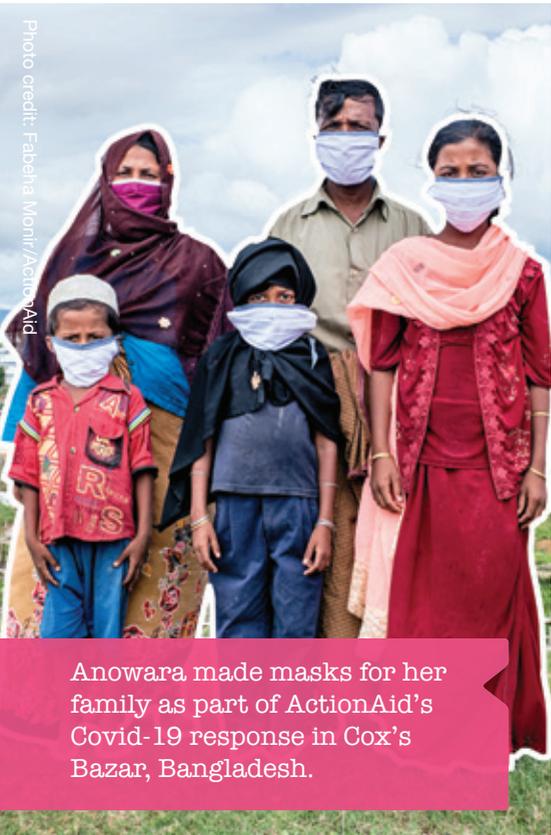
But the group's effect on Birhane's life didn't end there. “We received financial support with training on basic business skill management. On only half a hectare of land, today I have 15 sheep and 16 bee colonies. I have earned birr 15,000 [about £350] from honey production in the last two years. I can fulfil the basic needs of my children without any problem.” •



Birhane amongst her beehives in Ethiopia.

A STITCH IN TIME SAVES LIVES

In Cox's Bazar refugee camp, a life-saving project is underway...



make face masks to stop the spread of a deadly disease. But when the Covid-19 pandemic struck, this is exactly what she began doing.

In the crowded, unsanitary conditions of the Cox's Bazar camp, controlling the virus has been challenging. Soap and water are hard to come by, and social distancing is impossible. This makes masks vital for keeping people safe.

At the ActionAid Women's Refuge in the camp – called Shanti Khana ('place of peace') – Jannatul and other members of our team run workshops in mask production.

This has been a vital step towards preventing disease. It has also provided some refugees with much needed livelihoods. This is just one example of the kind of transformational change that is possible when we **stand with women** who are working to make the world a better place.

A year ago, when Jannatul Ferdous began teaching embroidery in the Rohingya refugee camp at Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, she was not expecting to end up training people to

One of the Rohingya women attending the refuge is Anowara, a mother of five. "We don't have the money to buy a mask," she says. "We came to the Shanti Khana and learned to sew masks. I can wear it myself, and also sell it and earn money. We can buy food with the money and eat."

The workshops use proper health measures, including temperature checks, small groups and distancing. Attendees have access to soap and water. They also learn about hygiene – information they then share with their neighbours.

"I hear about cleanliness at the Shanti Khana," says Anowara. "I teach my neighbours based on what I have heard here. I tell people to stay clean,

to wash hands, to stay three feet away, to not hug one another."

Jannatul's team is hoping to step up mask production, as well as extending the range of psychosocial support offered at the refuge. "This is how we work and like this we are standing alongside the Rohingya community," she says.

Wherever women like Jannatul are working to build a safer, better world, it is vital that we stand with them. When ActionAid supporters **stand with women**, amazing things are possible. •



ActionAid trainer Jannatul Ferdous assists Sajida who is making masks inside an ActionAid women-friendly space.

Leave a lasting legacy of hope for women and girls living in poverty

Gifts left in Wills are one of the most powerful and important forms of support ActionAid receives. That's why we have partnered with Will Aid to give you the chance to have your Will professionally drawn up by a qualified solicitor this November.

The usual solicitor's fee will be waived, so instead you are invited to make a voluntary donation, which will help fund life changing work around the world.

All donations made via Will Aid are divided between the nine participating charities – including ActionAid. Use Will Aid's online postcode search via willaid.org.uk/will-makers/be-the-first to find a participating solicitor near you, or call **0300 0309 558** for details.

“Each person who remembers ActionAid in their Will is in fact remembering the world's poorest people”

Girish Menon
(CEO, ActionAid)



Fulera, 30, with her daughter Sauda, 14 in a classroom in the Upper West state of northern Ghana.

The donation is voluntary, but the suggested minimum donations are:

£80 for a basic Will
£100 for a pair of mirror Wills

Talk to us confidentially about leaving a gift in your Will by calling our friendly supporter contact team on **01460 238 000** or by emailing supportercontact@actionaid.org

Visit actionaid.org.uk/legacy to find out more.



Leave a legacy of hope for women like Fulera

Fulera lives in a village in the Upper West region of Ghana. When she was a girl of 15, she was kidnapped and forced to marry a man twice her age.

Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, including those who have chosen to support ActionAid through a gift left in their Will, ActionAid is working in Fulera's village to raise awareness of the problems of child marriage and forced marriage by abduction.

Fulera is pleased to know that ActionAid is working to combat the problem. “I have heard that if a girl is missing from school in this community, ActionAid get the information that this girl has been abducted. If your daughter is under the protection of ActionAid, she is safe because if a man grabs her ActionAid will follow and punish the man and bring the girl back.”

Your legacy gift would help ensure that we can continue to be there for women and girls like Fulera, and her daughter Sauda, well into the future. •

Fulera, 30, talks about how she was abducted and forced into marriage at age 15.

Photo credits: Ruth McDowall/ActionAid

To all our amazing lockdown fundraisers, we would like to say THANK YOU!



Despite dealing with the impact of coronavirus in their own lives, our dedicated supporters have come up with unique, inventive ways to fundraise and support women and girls living in poverty.

From running to birthday pirate plunders, from daily TikTok dance challenges to head shaves, from recipe sharing clubs to virtual yoga sessions and 24-hour gameathons, we are continuously inspired by our fantastically creative fundraisers!

We would like to extend a massive THANK YOU to our lockdown fundraisers and share some of their incredible achievements with you...



Elizabeth Palmer

As part of the 2.6 Challenge, established by the London Marathon to support UK charities, Elizabeth completed a sketch every day for 26 days. She managed to raise £135 and produced some beautiful artwork!

Elizabeth then kindly decided to gift her sketches to all of her friends and family who donated to her JustGiving page. We're sure her supporters will be delighted with their wonderful new art.



Mark & Molly Corbett

Dad and daughter duo Mark and Molly took on the challenge of running two half marathons in one month around their local area. They wanted to do this to raise money to support the ActionAid coronavirus emergency appeal.

Molly and Mark raised over £1,000 which will help local women to lead an effective response against coronavirus. Molly says,

“Coronavirus is a global pandemic, so it calls for global kindness.”

Molly Corbett

We couldn't agree more, Molly!

Thank you to everyone for your dedication and support of women and girls living in poverty throughout this difficult time. •

John Ormond & Rosie

At age 75, John has taken on 15 annual marathons to support ActionAid and over this time he has raised an amazing £25,000! During the period of lockdown, John and his running canine companion, Rosie, set themselves the challenge of running 500 miles. That's almost 20 marathons!

Through John's lockdown marathon challenge, he fundraised over £1,000 with the help of Rosie and his wife Pat. He even had a special ActionAid doggie coat made for Rosie. We think it looks very stylish!

If you would like to try something new or turn your new lockdown hobby into a fundraiser, we're here to support you. Just get in touch with events@actionaid.org or visit [actionaid.org.uk/fundraise](https://www.actionaid.org.uk/fundraise)

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FREE LEARNING PACKS

A fun way to help the children in your
life explore their world!

Turn dreary days into Discovery Days by signing up for six **FREE**, downloadable packs of world-expanding activities from ActionAid! Targeted at children aged 6 to 11.

Find out more at actionaid.org.uk/discover