

# Action

Changing the world  
with **women and girls**

**act:onaid**

## **Climate issue**

In the face of a changing climate, your support is helping women like Delencia adapt and build a sustainable future

Issue 23 Spring 2023



# Welcome to your Spring 2023 issue of *Action* magazine!

## In a changing world, our support must be steadfast

Climate change is certainly not something we need to talk about in the future tense – its devastating effects are already being felt across the world, with some of its worst impacts occurring disproportionately in some of the world's poorest countries. With your support, women and girls in affected communities are working to build resilience and create a sustainable future.

In this issue of *Action* magazine we're building on our *She is the Answer* appeal from 2021, highlighting a number of women who are on the front line of the climate crisis. Antônia, Delencia, Tulsí and Hue live in different countries and in very different circumstances, but they are four deeply impressive women, united by their determination and resourcefulness in the face of unprecedented change.

To them, and to the women and girls affected by the earthquake in Turkey and Syria (see update on p.4), we owe our unwavering support. As these pages show, when we stand together and take action, our impact can change, and even save, lives.

Thank you, from all of us at ActionAid, for helping to change the world with women and girls.

**John Good**  
Interim CEO  
ActionAid UK

Changing the world  
with women and girls  
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Front cover: Delencia in Mozambique is working hard to make a success of her farm in the face of climate challenges. © Treunha Zangado

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"First you must dream, then you go achieve it." Antônia is determined to make change – read her story on p.6-7.



Destruction caused by the earthquake in Hatay, Turkey.

© Cansu Yildiran/ActionAid

# Update from Turkey and Syria

**As well as supporting ActionAid's ongoing work with women and girls around the world, your generosity also helps ensure that we are ready to act quickly when disaster strikes.** The importance of your support was made very clear in the aftermath of a devastating earthquake at the start of this year.

Early in the morning on February 6th, southern and central Turkey were rocked by an earthquake with a seismic magnitude of 7.8. One of the strongest quakes ever to strike the country, it was felt as far away as

Egypt and Cyprus, and the devastation it caused was truly horrific.

In the initial earthquake, and the series of quakes and aftershocks that followed, more than 50,000 people were killed over a vast area that spread across the border into Syria. The numbers of injured were far higher, and the widespread collapse of buildings left an estimated 1.5 million people homeless.

Thanks to the kind support of people like you, ActionAid was able to get to work immediately.

Within hours of the quake, our partners' rescue teams began clearing rubble from collapsed buildings and distributing blankets, heaters, food and cash to those who had been displaced and were now homeless.

The region affected by the earthquake was already facing serious challenges, as it was home to large numbers of people who had fled the ongoing conflict in Syria – around two million Syrian refugees, living in tents and makeshift shelters on both sides of the border. So many people who had already fled terror suddenly found their lives in danger once more from an entirely different threat.

In a major disaster, sadly, there is almost always an increase in the risks to women and girls – through increased vulnerability and violence; heightened risk of abuse and trafficking; and lack of access to period products and prenatal healthcare. The Turkey/Syria earthquake is no exception, which is

why ActionAid's presence in the region is so vital.

Our supporters made it possible for us to set up safe spaces, where women and girls have been receiving specialised help, including psychological support, from Mental Health Teams. We have also been distributing emergency kits that contain, among other things, much-needed period products.

We saw an amazing response to both our own appeal and the collective DEC appeal we were a part of. The generosity of our supporters, especially given the challenging economic times, is already having a huge impact on so many lives. The consequences of the earthquake have been severe and as people continue to face an uncertain future and a precarious present, support like yours can make a huge difference.

To find out more or make a donation to our Turkey-Syria Earthquake campaign please visit our website [actionaid.org.uk](https://www.actionaid.org.uk)



Survivors left homeless sleep on a football pitch in Hatay, Turkey.

© Cansu Yildiran / ActionAid



# Women and Climate

Across the globe, in communities on the front lines of the climate crisis, women are taking action, finding ways to adapt and thrive as the world changes around them.

On these pages, you will meet four remarkable women – Antônia, Delencia, Tulsi and Hue – and learn how, with your support, they are working for a sustainable future.

**“You can’t do anything alone these days.”**

Antônia, Brazil

**Women’s organisations can provide the solidarity needed for communities like Antônia’s to adapt to a changing world.**

For several years now, the North-eastern region of Brazil has been experiencing intense droughts. Water is in short supply – people need to rely on the supply provided by visiting the water trucks, but these are too expensive for many families. This has meant that few residents still have pastures for animals or the capability to grow food, placing farmers in an impossible situation.

Now aged 61, Antônia has watched

her region change, along with its climate, over the years. As incomes from farming have dwindled, she has seen young people grow up and move away in search of better opportunities. She has seen local schools close their doors and the disappearance of vital local programmes to support those on low incomes.

Traditionally, women and girls in this region have not been encouraged to take leadership roles or participate in local decision-making. This lack of opportunities has been limiting in the past, but today change is in the air. Women are taking a stand in the face of climate change, and ActionAid is standing with them.

This work is taking a wide range of forms, from installing water cisterns to improved access to education for local children.

Meanwhile, through stronger rural women’s organisations, women are increasing their participation in the economic and social lives of their communities, stepping up into leadership roles and accessing their rights.

Antônia finds great strength in her women’s group. “You can’t do anything alone these days,” she says. “I think that any human being that is considering walking alone will have problems. We must be together to strengthen ourselves, to pursue our goals and dreams together.”

One unexpected new direction for her has been branching out into beekeeping, which she has found both lucrative and sustainable, as climate instability has made other forms of agriculture less reliable.

Beekeeping is exactly the kind of agroecology project that ActionAid and our supporters have been helping to make possible for many years – including through our Gifts in Action programme. Honey production is a perfect way for traditional farmers to refocus their work, when raising crops and livestock is no longer possible.

“When I started working with bees, my husband was against it,” Antônia says. “He was afraid that the bees would kill the goats and chickens. But when he saw how much money I was making from the honey, he changed his mind. Then I realized that if you start to understand how it works, you must lead the way.”

Antônia is just getting started. She still has a lot of dreams for her community and is determined to keep working for change.

“If you stop dreaming, you stop being active. First you must dream, then you go achieve it. My dream is to see people even more organized. To know what we must become. Some are still saying: “well, I’m not sure”, but I won’t condemn. You’re my friend, let’s keep the boat going anyway. You’re still not ready to get there, but together we’ll arrive.”

© Erika Azevedo/ActionAid





# “My life is changing little by little.”

Delencia, Mozambique

The profits from Delencia's cabbage harvest have helped transform her family's future.



© Treunha Zangado

**You're helping to provide essential training and infrastructure, so that farmers like Delencia can find new ways of working.**

Delencia is 22 and lives in a community in rural Mozambique with her parents and three of her brothers. Like many of their neighbours, she and her family depend on agriculture for their livelihood. She is a member of a farming association, who work together to grow and sell everything from beans and peanuts to sweet potatoes and corn.

In recent years, as the impact of climate change has made itself felt, farming

in Delencia's region has become far more challenging.

The increasingly unstable climate has led to irregular rainfall patterns, with alternating droughts and flooding taking their toll on crops. Decreasing vegetable production has plunged Delencia's community into economic uncertainty and food insecurity.

The generosity of our supporters has enabled ActionAid to provide vital assistance to many affected by the changing climate in Mozambique. Working with NADEC, a partner organisation in the region, we are

running training sessions to help farmers build resilience and adapt in the face of climate change.

Delencia was one of a group of 320 who took part in this training. “I am very happy with the project that aims to improve food security and has financed the installation of a drip irrigation system,” she says.

“I was trained in sustainable agriculture, managing the drip irrigation system, which is contributing to the increase in production, saving efforts in irrigation of crops.”

**Delencia**

In the days before the irrigation system, the work of farming was gruelling. Delencia recalls the hard work that went into water collection. “We had many

difficulties. It took us a long time, since we used watering cans with a capacity of 10 litres each.”

But now, Delencia has a real feeling of progress. “My life is changing little by little.” She told us: “With the sale of the produce from our farm, I was able to support my parents by putting energy into the house and connecting drinking water.”

Supporters like you have provided Delencia and many of her neighbours with training, seeds and crop monitoring, and she is delighted with the results. “This program is very valuable, as it teaches us the best paths to follow so that we can guarantee the sustainability of our families. I hope the system can help us for many years to come and the production of tomatoes, cabbage, carrots, peppers and other vegetables will increase year after year.”

Delencia with her tomato seedling ready to be transplanted.



© Treunha Zangado





## Tulsi's story: sustainable farming for a brighter future

Tulsi and her husband farm a small plot of land they own in rural India. They depend on the sales of their produce to cover living costs and pay for their three children's schooling. However, with crop levels diminishing over the few past years, it became increasingly difficult for the family to cover their living costs.

**In India, your support is helping women like Tulsi to claim their rights and transform their families' futures using sustainable farming practices.**



Tulsi and her group have now successfully lobbied their local government for a pathway to improve access to their fields.



Tulsi (left) and other members of her women's group with their high-quality seeds.

In search of a way to boost productivity, Tulsi and her husband began using fertilisers and pesticides on their crops. When bugs infested their crops and the family suffered huge losses, they were forced to borrow money from a private lender at an exorbitant rate.

It was during these tough times that a neighbour suggested to Tulsi that she join a local ActionAid women's group. As part of the group, Tulsi received training on the benefits of using indigenous seeds which grow better in the local soil and climate. The group also learnt more about their rights and entitlements as women and how to apply for government livelihood support.

Tulsi and the other women were successful applying for government funding for the procurement of high-quality indigenous seeds and storage

facilities to help make their farming more profitable and sustainable. After their previous success, the women have since turned their attentions to lobbying their local government for a pathway to improve access to their fields.

**"I am pleased to share that the harvest of rice and wheat exceeded our family's needs after using the indigenous seeds."**

**Tulsi**

The group deposited their excess grains in a seed bank in order to preserve them for future seasons. Tulsi and the other women are now also able to sell excess seeds to other local farmers at a fair price, helping to provide a stable income for them all.





Farmers like Hue must adapt to the changing climate – thanks to your kind support, new traditions are taking root in the remote mountains of Vietnam.

## The roots of change

**How a brand new crop – ginger – is having a transformational impact on farming communities in a remote mountain region.**

In a rural community of just over 2,000 inhabitants, in the mountains of Vietnam, times are hard for farmers.

Arid soil and meagre harvests – due in part to the changing climate – have left many residents living in poverty or leaving altogether, in search of opportunities elsewhere. Meanwhile, the rugged mountain landscape makes the

remote community almost inaccessible, meaning that new farming techniques and technologies have not always made their way here.

38-year-old Hue has been just about able to earn a living working her small family farm, but although she has tried many different crops, in recent years she has barely been able to grow and sell enough to feed her family.

With the aim of boosting the region's economic situation – and improving

Hue and her community's lives have been transformed by the arrival of ginger.

the lives of the farming households, many of which are led by women like Hue – farmers have been taking part in ActionAid-funded courses that have trained them in the growing of ginger.

Ginger has many advantages for farmers like Hue. For one thing, it is not expensive to grow. It also has a short cultivation time, with crops being ready to harvest just ten months after planting, and there is good and reliable market demand for it. Best of all, ginger is very well suited to the region's soil and climate conditions.

Nearly 60 households took part in ActionAid's pilot training programme. Family heads received training on farming techniques including soil preparation, composting and the use of homemade, organic fertilisers and pesticides to cultivate ginger to the highest standard.

Then, each household was provided with seedlings and farming material to start cultivating ginger on 6 hectares of forest

land. Planting ginger in the shade of trees gives it the moist, fertile soil it needs, while ensuring it is protected from harsh sunlight.

The impact of the ginger growing programme has been remarkable. In the first year alone, the community produced an incredible 50 tonnes of ginger, and households saw an increase in annual income of up to around £500 apiece.

This economic boost has meant that people from Hue's village no longer need to migrate to other provinces or neighbouring countries in order to earn an income – they can make a good living in their own community. The popularity is now spreading, with others in the region looking to adopt ginger cultivation as a means of economic prosperity.

Around the world, changes in climate are forcing women like Antônia, Delencia, Tulsi and Hue to abandon centuries of tradition and adopt new practices in order to thrive in the years ahead.

**With your help ActionAid is proud to be supporting them as they build resilience and adapt to create a sustainable future.**





Olwyn is including a gift to ActionAid in her will – an act of generosity that will have an impact on future generations.

# A priceless gift

Did you know that 60% of adults in the UK do not have a Will? And of those who do, life events such as a new home or birth of a grandchild means 30% of Wills need updating.

Yet the peace of mind in knowing that your loved ones will be taken care of is priceless. And by leaving a gift in your Will to ActionAid, you can also ensure that your lifetime support of women and girls lives on – at no cost to you now.

ActionAid is now part of the Free Wills Network, which connects our supporters with trusted local solicitors, who can draw up a simple Will, or update your existing one, for free. There is no obligation to leave us a gift, although of course we hope you will give it consideration.

To find out more and request a Free Will referral visit webpage [actionaid.org.uk/freewills23](https://actionaid.org.uk/freewills23)

Alternatively, please email us at [legacies@actionaid.org](mailto:legacies@actionaid.org) or call our friendly Supporter Contact team on **01460 238 000**, and we will pass on your request to the Free Will Network.

Olwyn, from Scotland, has been a supporter of ActionAid for over 45 years, initially sponsoring many children in The Gambia and is today supporting our wider work there. She told us:

"When it came to writing my Will, it was only logical to include a charity close to my heart.

I think it's vital that local people have real input into the projects that will be delivered in their community. That's why I'm confident that the gift I've left in my Will to ActionAid will have a real impact on future generations.

Women and girls everywhere deserve the same opportunities as men and boys, and a community cannot truly progress and tackle poverty unless women and girls are empowered."



**12%** of Wills contain a gift to charity



**Gifts in Wills are increasingly vital to our work. In 2015 they represented 5% of our total unrestricted income, in 2021 it was 13%**





# Let women lead!

Parliamentary event to mark 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence

In November, ActionAid UK and some of our fantastic campaigners met MPs, Peers and Government officials at Parliament to show them how women and girls are leading the way to end violence in their communities.

The event was part of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, an annual campaign in which activists amplify their calls for change.

Speaking to the assembled guests, Dr Kendi Guantai, ActionAid UK's Chair of Trustees, said, "Violence against women and girls remains one of the world's most persistent and widespread human rights abuses."

As in all emergencies, the Covid-19 pandemic saw a dramatic rise in rates of gender-based violence across the world. School closures due to the pandemic increased the risks of violence, adolescent pregnancy and harmful practices including forced early marriages.

ActionAid took the opportunity at Parliament to highlight how gender based violence is a fundamental human rights violation, affecting around one in three women and girls around the world.

In the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, as services became scarce, women's

© Matthew Supersad/ActionAid



Catharine Brown, Trustee; The Speaker of the House of Commons, Rt. Hon. Sir Lindsay Hoyle MP; Dr Kendi Guantai, Chair of Trustees; Fik Woldegiorgis, Trustee; and Mike Noyes, Co-Director of Policy, Advocacy and Programmes.

rights organisations stepped in to set up helplines and offered services such as legal support and safe spaces. They also made sure their governments knew of the changing needs of women and girls and that it was their responsibility to meet them.

Despite this, **women and girls' leadership in crises remains unrecognised, undervalued and underfunded.** And in decision-making spaces, women are still woefully under-represented.

At the event, ActionAid UK's Co-Director of Policy, Advocacy and Programmes, Hannah Bond, shared Building Power Together - ActionAid's Girl-Led Research, a body of work in which girls examined their peers' experiences in Bangladesh, Indonesia and Ethiopia

during the pandemic. Hannah explained that, despite an increase in the threats against them, "the research brought to light girls' voices and agency, showing the power girls have when they organise together."

Speeches at the event closed with a performance by award-winning poet Rakaya Esime Fetuga, who reminded us of the power of women's voices in the face of violence. In her piece called Voice Could, she read,

*"Let your words out. The fireball that burns you is amazingly bright, your voice can draw you out of your permanent night. It's okay to be scared there is power in fright when it leads to the courage that lets your voice lift in flight."*

Ending gender-based violence is central to ActionAid's work and, with the help of our supporters, we continue **to call on the UK Government to put women and girls' leadership at the heart of everything they do.** This means listening to and resourcing feminist movements, women's rights organisations and girl-led groups and valuing their expertise, priorities and goals.



# Shifting power dynamics in Zimbabwe

A spotlight on a project made possible by an award from Postcode International Trust, thanks to funds raised by players of People's Postcode Lottery.

**Around the world, a significant factor driving gender inequality is the unequal power dynamic between women and girls on the one hand, and men and boys on the other.**

With an award from Postcode International Trust one project in Zimbabwe is seeking to address this imbalance, and work towards a more just and equal society.

The TORCHES (Towards Resilient Communities with Health, Equity and Safety for all) project is now going into its third year, having been supported by players of People's Postcode Lottery since its inception in 2021.

Focused across three districts in northern Zimbabwe, TORCHES is a project that works in communities and schools to address power imbalances. Its aim is to lead change by challenging social norms related not just to gender but also to other factors such as disability inclusion.

Working with the community, we explored what power is, who has it, how it is used, how it is abused, and how power dynamics between women and men can change for the better and help to prevent gender-based violence – especially in public spaces, such as water collection points.



© Chiara Rossetti

It is especially important that the message of equality be heard and picked up by the men in the community. A 32-year-old man in Nyanga explains how the programme has transformed not just his thinking but his behaviour. “[The] sessions taught me about power relations,” he says.

**“I was taught that everyone has power to transform the community. It was an enlightening moment for me, as I realised that all along I had been using my power to destroy my community instead of building it.”**

“Now I use my power to end all forms of violence against women and girls which includes child marriages and sexual violence. When I see people fighting or a man beating up his wife, I help them by reporting or enlightening them on the dangers and effects of gender-based violence. I now use my power for the betterment of my community.”

Laura Chow, Head of Charities at People's Postcode Lottery, says: “Our players raised over £16 million to support ActionAid's work towards a just, equitable, and sustainable world. The TORCHES project demonstrates how we can achieve a more equal society by addressing power imbalances and supporting those affected by them.”



© ActionAid

A group of participants taking part in a TORCHES training session.



# Celebrate with ActionAid

Looking for a new way to mark a celebration? Whether it's a birthday, wedding or another milestone moment, try switching gifts for donations and help women and girls transform their future.

6-year-old Avigail from Nottingham raised over £300 when she asked her friends and family to swap presents for donations, after learning that millions of girls around the world are not able to go to school like she does.

*"I missed going to school when it was lockdown and it makes me sad that other girls don't get to go to school normally. I think it's important that girls go to school. I'd like to help all girls, but I can't. But maybe my friends can help me."*



## How do I set up a fundraiser?

There are two main platforms you can use to create your fundraiser – JustGiving and Facebook. Both are really simple to set up and your donations come automatically to ActionAid so you can concentrate on celebrating. Check out our celebrations page on our website to find out more:

[actionaid.org.uk/celebrate](https://actionaid.org.uk/celebrate)



scan me

**£6** could buy a scented candle...  
**or** smoke-free stoves for women in Uganda.

**£25** could buy a spa voucher...  
**or** produce booklets on laws and policies protecting women against abuse.

**£84** could buy a food and drink hamper...**or** supply a school bag, books and pencils for five girls.

**£210** could buy a luxury night away...  
**or** provide leadership training for women in Ethiopia to set up a savings and credit co-operative.