

# Action

Changing the world  
with **women and girls**

**act:onaid**



"WE ARE NOW  
CONFIDENT AND  
BELIEVE IN  
OURSELVES."

Inside, find out why girls like  
**Jeanne** are no longer being  
forced to miss school.

Our summer appeal focused on ending period poverty. We raised £80,948 to help girls, like these schoolgirls in Malawi, manage their periods safely and without shame.

Photo credit: Samantha Reinders/ActionAid

Welcome to your autumn edition of *Action* mag! It's been a busy few months at ActionAid and we hope you enjoy reading about what we've been up to.

In June, we launched our summer appeal to help end period poverty and enable girls to stay in school when they're menstruating. You can read more about our life-changing safe room initiative on page 6.

Pages 10-13 focus on our long-standing child sponsorship scheme and on 16-17 is an interview with humanitarian hero Elsia, who sheltered her community when Hurricane Matthew struck Haiti. We've also included an update about our work with survivors of the devastating Cyclone Idai.

Thanks to people like you, the women and girls we work with are learning about their rights and are leading their communities out of poverty and towards a better future. We are so grateful for your continued support.



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**Changing the world with women and girls** actionaid  
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Majiva, 32, lost her three children and mother when Cyclone Idai made landfall in Zimbabwe.



## CYCLONE IDAI

# How you've helped those who lost everything

On March 14, a devastating cyclone made landfall in Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi, killing more than 1,200 people and destroying over 111,000 homes. The cyclone is thought to be the worst weather-related disaster to have hit the southern hemisphere. In total it has affected more than three million people, including 1.5million people in Mozambique – the worst hit country.

Thanks to incredible supporters like you who donated to our Cyclone Idai appeal, ActionAid was able to respond to the crisis immediately.

Our response has involved distributing food, blankets, water-purification tablets, shelters, clothes, mosquito nets and dignity kits for women and girls in the three affected countries. It's because of you that we've been able to continue our response in the months following the disaster.

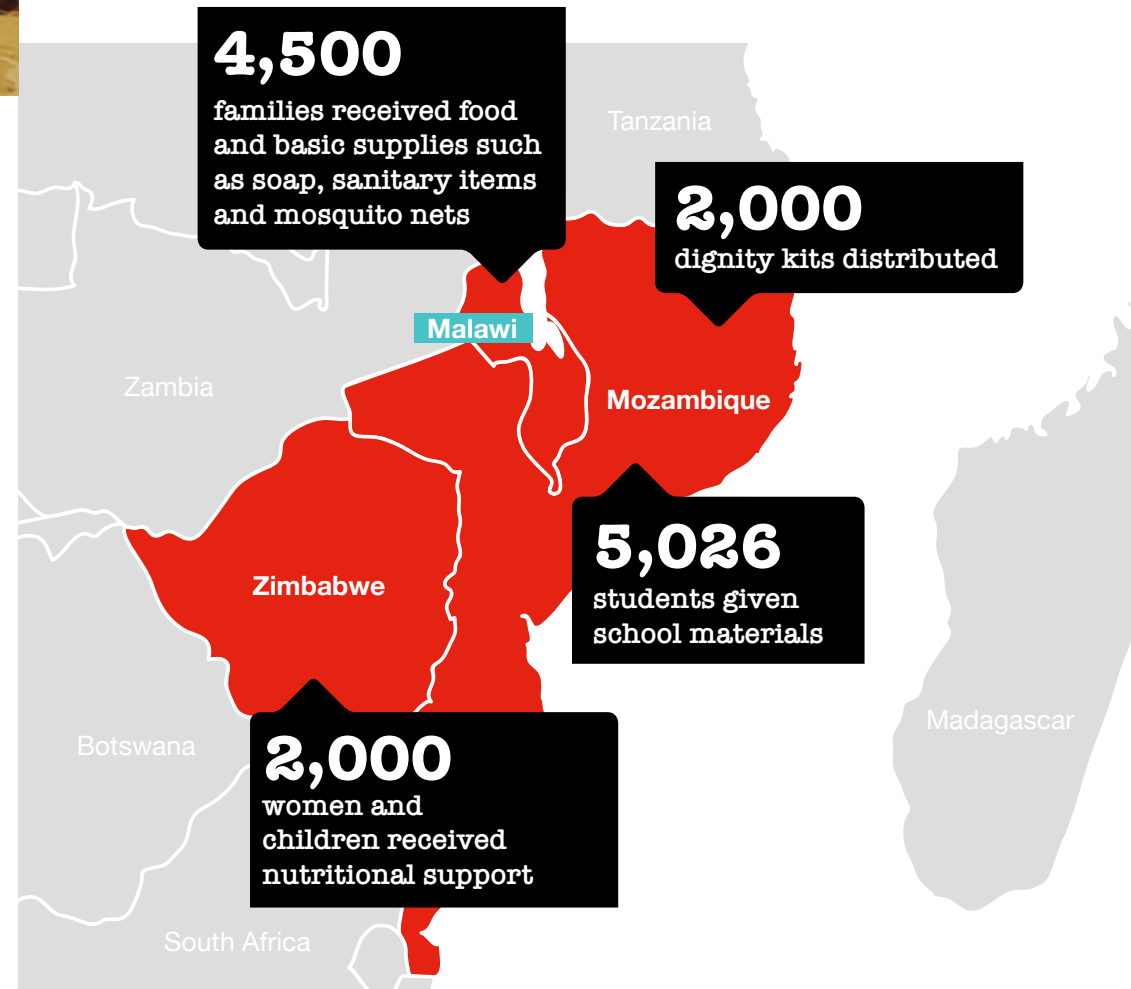
Our approach in an emergency is to prioritise women's rights and leadership, as evidence shows that when women are empowered to make decisions after a crisis, their whole community recovers faster. With your support, in Mozambique, for example,

we have been training women in farming to help them generate an income following the disaster.

When the Cyclone struck Zimbabwe, single mother-of-three Majiva's three children and mother went missing. Her youngest child, a baby, slipped off her back due to the intensity of the rain and was swept away. "My house has gone, along with all my family members. I am left all alone," she says.

Sadly Majiva's devastating story is not unique, which is why part of ActionAid's response has involved setting up women-friendly spaces in Zimbabwe where survivors of the cyclone can access essential psychological support.

Thanks to your donations, we can continue responding to the emergency and supporting survivors, with a focus on preserving the rights and safety of the women and girls affected. •



## RWANDA

# Helping girls stay in school

In Rwanda, many girls miss up to 50 days of school every year because of period poverty and stigma.

Until recently, 14-year-old Jeanne was one of these girls. She would skip school for up to five days during her period.

Along with many of her friends living in Nyanza, southern Rwanda, Jeanne didn't have access to sanitary protection and would use cloth to absorb the blood, often resulting in embarrassing leaks. "The girls would miss school a lot and even drop out because they would be bullied and teased by the boys," she says.

But the lives of Jeanne and her schoolfriends have been transformed. Thanks to the support of donors like you, ActionAid was able to build a safe room in Jeanne's school, where girls can shower, change, lie down if they're in pain and access sanitary pads. They're also given support to manage their periods and advice not just on menstruating, but on sexual health and

rights, as well as dealing with difficult relationships and preventing HIV.

Now, girls at Jeanne's school are no longer missing classes. They can simply ask for the key to the room, with no questions asked. Teachers say that before the safe rooms were installed, girls were struggling with their work because they were missing school every month. They are now competing with the boys to take the top positions in class!

Success stories like Jeanne's are why ActionAid supports the provision of private, welcoming safe rooms for schoolgirls, to help them manage their periods safely and confidently.

We are so grateful to everyone who supported our summer appeal. Thanks to you, we are even closer to ensuring that no girl, anywhere, is held back for having her period. •



When Jeanne, 14, has her period, she uses the safe room installed by ActionAid in her school.



## GHANA

# Boys driving change in their communities

The denial of women and girls' rights is one of the biggest causes of poverty worldwide – and a grave injustice. That's why ActionAid puts the rights of women and girls at the heart of everything we do.

But we know that to end violence against women and girls and tackle poverty worldwide, we need the support of men, boys and whole communities. Everyone has a role

to play in calling out inequality and demanding equal rights for everyone.

To achieve gender equality around the world, we need more men and boys like 19-year-old Safianu, from Ghana. Safianu told us that ever since he attended a series of ActionAid-led workshops in his village, he has been helping change sexist attitudes in his community. The workshops Safianu attended aimed to raise awareness

about the burden of household chores that falls on women and girls and how unfair it is.

When the workshops finished, an indignant Safianu spoke to his parents about redistributing the family's chores. His parents decided to teach Safianu and his brothers to cook, so that they could help their sisters in the kitchen.

“I have always wanted to learn how to cook and support my mum and sisters.”

**Safianu**

“From a very young age I was told it was the job of the women and girls to cook, clean, fetch the water and firewood and do all the other household chores,” says Safianu. “I have had a long interest in food and have always wanted to learn how to cook and support my mum and sisters. But because of attitudes, I was never able to do that.”

Safianu has even taken the initiative to help change the attitudes of other men and boys in his village. “At the beginning, not everyone was on board... but my cooking skills have inspired many other boys to learn



An ActionAid cooking workshop for men in Safianu's village in Ghana.

to cook and share the household chores,” he says.

“I am very grateful to ActionAid for helping our community see that the burden of work on women and girls was out of balance.”

Safianu is now an ambassador for equality in his community, which is throwing its weight behind a more equal distribution of household chores. We are so grateful to the men and boys who are as passionate as we are about achieving gender equality. ●



Safianu, 19, is now an ambassador for equality in his community.



# How child sponsorship brings hope

ActionAid's long-standing child sponsorship programme began in 1972 and originally focused on buying books and school uniforms for 88 children in Kenya and India. In the almost 50-year period since its inception, the programme has evolved from providing a few children with essential items to helping entire communities in a long-term and sustainable way.

Binta, 17, is a member of a school network supported by ActionAid.



There are 41,247 UK-based child sponsors who support nearly 45,000 girls and boys in 30 countries including Guatemala, Afghanistan, India and Tanzania. In 2018, ActionAid raised almost £12 million to fund child sponsorship programmes, which range from providing clean water in schools to teaching women in the community skills to enable them to earn an independent income.

**41,247**  
UK-based  
child sponsors

That's why when you sponsor a boy or a girl, some of your money will help fund projects in your child's community that promote girls' rights and opportunities.

One girl who has benefitted from child sponsorship is Binta, who lives in a central region of The Gambia. Thanks to the generous support of our amazing child sponsors in the UK, the 17-year-old is part of one of several school networks established across the country.

We believe that the most effective way of supporting everyone is to start by tackling gender inequality, as this is a leading cause of poverty.

These school networks, which are made up of teachers, parents and students, educate girls about the laws and

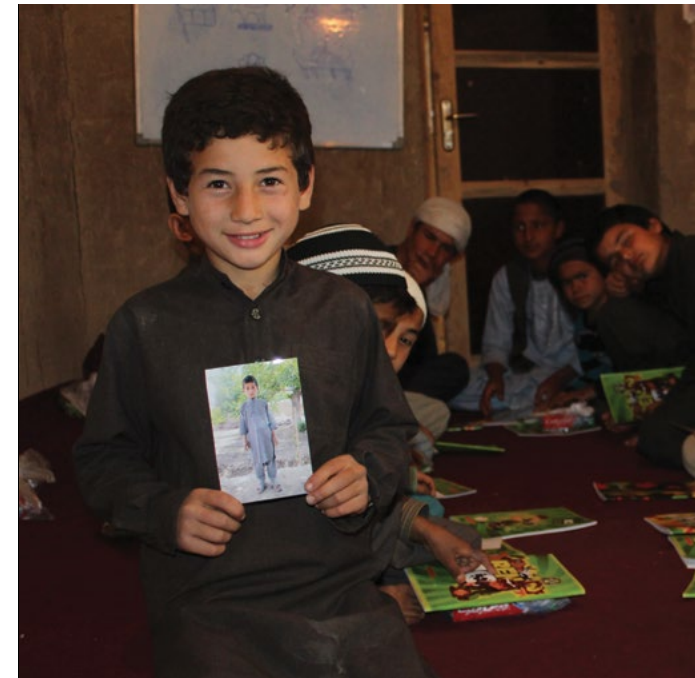


Photo credits: ActionAid

policies that are in place to protect them from sexual violence and help them to stay in school so that they receive the education they are entitled to. Through the network, Binta has been taught numerous skills including how to take care of her personal hygiene and say no to early marriage. She is now teaching her schoolfriends what she has learned, including the importance of staying in school.

"I was happy to [remember] what I learnt so that I can teach my friends," she says. "On behalf of my fellow students from the network, I say thank you to ActionAid for your endless support."

What makes our child sponsorship programme different is that it doesn't benefit just one child; instead, they support whole communities to tackle poverty and end gender inequality. We work directly with communities to help them create better futures for the children and families that live there. By partnering



Sponsored child Faisal, from Afghanistan, is pictured with his photo ready to send to his sponsor.

with local people, we are better placed to bring about long-lasting change.

**£12m**  
raised by child  
sponsors in 2018

Thanks to the generosity of our fantastic network of child sponsors, thousands of girls and boys are growing up healthy, happy and with more opportunities.

**To find out more about child sponsorship, visit:**  
[actionaid.org.uk/sponsor-a-child](https://www.actionaid.org.uk/sponsor-a-child)



# Little by little, you can change the world

How our passionate grassroots campaigners are taking action to speak out for the rights of women and girls around the world.

When almost every day there's news about violence against women and powerful leaders rolling back progress on women's rights, it can sometimes feel impossible to make a difference. But ActionAid's community campaigners are finding power through collective action.

When Mr Trump attended a state banquet in Buckingham Palace this June, our fantastic campaigners from around the UK came together to take part in a People's Banquet in London's Parliament Square.

They took a stand against the politics of misogyny and division by sharing messages of solidarity and justice, singing songs, breaking bread and talking about the value of women's rights activism.

Community campaigner Ria (pictured) spoke on stage at the People's Banquet

and was later interviewed by the BBC and Huffington Post. The 18-year-old sixth former reminded the crowd that "the fight for women's rights is for everyone and can be fought by anyone".

Throughout the year, activists like Ria are trained by ActionAid's campaigns team to take action to promote and raise awareness about women's rights. From flash mobs to feminism-themed craft sessions, our campaigning activities are diverse, inclusive and always impactful. "It's nice feeling that, little by little, you can change the world," says long-term ActionAid campaigner Giulia.

**If you want to know more about ActionAid activism and how to join us, please visit:**

[actionaid.org.uk/campaign/become-a-campaigner](https://actionaid.org.uk/campaign/become-a-campaigner) •

Ria, our community campaigner, speaks at the People's Banquet.



Photo credit: ActionAid



## HAITI

# Meet Elsia, a 'humanitarian hero'

When disaster strikes, ActionAid empowers local women to lead the response. One of these women is Elsia, who helped save lives and support her community when a powerful hurricane hit Haiti in October 2016.

The Category 4 hurricane killed hundreds, destroyed thousands of homes and left nearly 1.4 million people in need of humanitarian assistance. This is Elsia's story:

### **What happened when Hurricane Matthew hit?**

My house was damaged, but it was the only one in the region that was still standing. It became a refuge with at least 30 people staying there, of every age group.

### **How did you cope with so many people sheltering in your house?**

It was hard, but I felt like it was for a reason – it was so everyone wouldn't be out under the rain and the mercy of nature. It was a difficult time. My kids and I had to sleep sitting up after I gave

my bed to older people or young kids. A lot of people who came in that night were wet and cold. I gave them all my clothes. I am a dressmaker, so people were even wearing the school uniforms I was making!

### **What support did you receive from ActionAid after the hurricane?**

I received a first-response kit with milk, water-purification tablets, soap and biscuits. I also received a cholera hygiene kit and cash [to support my family].

### **You became a team leader in ActionAid's Cash for Work scheme, which provided paid employment to thousands of hurricane-affected community members. What was that like?**



Photo credit: ActionAid

Elsia, a mother-of-five, sheltered more than 30 people from her community when Hurricane Matthew struck in 2016.

I participated in and led the team, working on the land and planting beans and corn. I used the money I earned to buy more seeds to grow my garden.

### **Did your team respect you as a woman leader?**

Yes – the team members have strong principles and guidelines which they abide by.

### **Do you have hope for your community?**

Yes, because with solidarity, support, training, awareness and by working together, we can make a change. Things will get better.

*This interview has been edited for clarity and brevity.* •



## FIRST HAND EXPERIENCE

# A trip of a lifetime

Every year, ActionAid gives supporters the opportunity to embark on a life-changing trip to one of the countries we work in.

In 2018, 45 supporters visited Rwanda for a First Hand Experience trip. There, they built two classrooms at a primary school in the country's Northern Province.



Supporters Graham and Lindsey get stuck into the project.

Just under 1,500 students attend the primary school. It has very limited classroom space, meaning teachers

are forced to give their lessons outside under trees. This environment makes it much harder for children to learn, resulting in poor performance and high dropout rates, further exacerbating the cycle of poverty.

The participants spent the eight-day trip building two new classrooms to address the overcrowding issue. They worked alongside members of the local community to help dig foundations, lay bricks and mix cement.

**“It was an unbelievable experience. I am proud to be part of it.”**

**Elaine, a repeat First Hand Experience participant.**

Nine months on, the project has been fully completed and the new classrooms have provided children with a far better environment to learn in.



The welcome ceremony held by the local community.

### Hear from our supporters!

One participant, Mette, took the opportunity to visit her sponsored child, Anitha, while in Rwanda. “It was an experience that will stay in my heart forever and I hope to visit Anitha and her family again one day,” she said.

Alan, a regular First Hand Experience participant, has made lifelong friendships on these trips. “I had not expected this when I set off on my first trip in 2015. [These friendships are] something that I cherish and make me return again and again.”

### What's next?

Join ActionAid for our next adventure! We love giving supporters like you the opportunity to contribute to ActionAid's work first-hand and see the difference that your generosity is making.

For more information about our First Hand Experience trips, visit:

[actionaid.org.uk/first-hand-experiences](https://actionaid.org.uk/first-hand-experiences)



The Rwandan schoolchildren enjoy learning in their new classrooms. •



# HELP FUTURE GENERATIONS

**With a gift in your will you can change the lives of women and girls living in poverty.**

This November, ActionAid is partnering with Will Aid to give you the chance to have your will professionally written up by a qualified solicitor.

Those wanting a bespoke will are invited to pay £95 for a simple basic will or £150 for two basic matching or mirror wills (ideal for a couple). All proceeds will be split between nine participating charities.

So, for the peace of mind a professionally-written will could give you, take part in Will Aid today and change the lives of women and girls living in poverty.

Photo credit: Sharron Lovell/ActionAid



**WILL  
AID**

Talk to us confidentially about leaving a gift in your will by calling our friendly supporter contact team on 020 3122 0551 or by emailing [legacies@actionaid.org](mailto:legacies@actionaid.org).

Visit [actionaid.org.uk/will](http://actionaid.org.uk/will) to find out more.