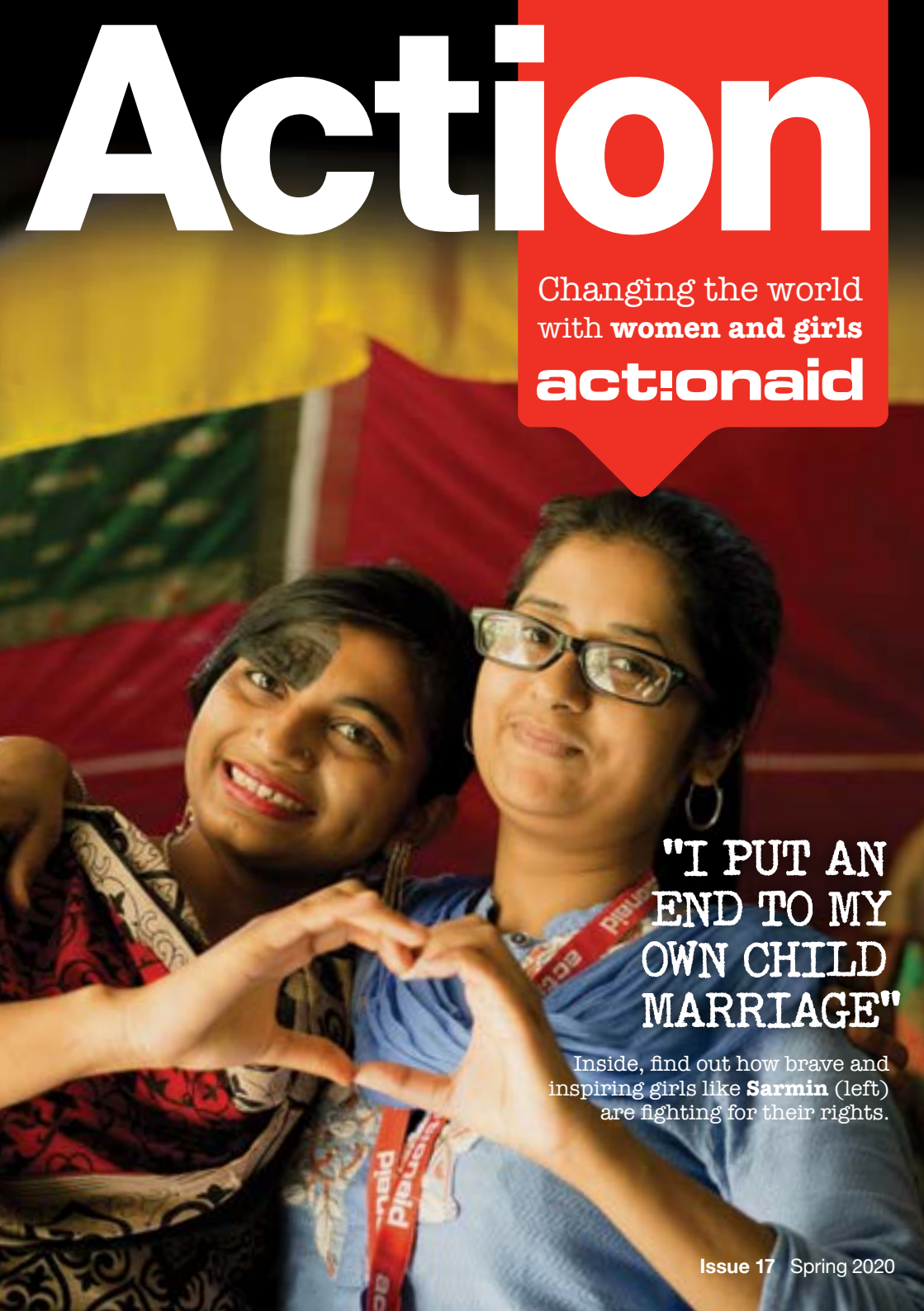


# Action

Changing the world  
with **women and girls**

**act:onaid**



"I PUT AN  
END TO MY  
OWN CHILD  
MARRIAGE"

Inside, find out how brave and  
inspiring girls like **Sarmin** (left)  
are fighting for their rights.



Hand-washing and coronavirus awareness raising takes place in child sponsorship communities in Odisha, India




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Photo credit: ActionAid India

## Welcome to your Spring 2020 edition of *Action* magazine!

We hope these stories of positivity provide a ray of sunshine in what can sometimes feel like a dark time for all. This magazine was created before coronavirus hit the UK, but the amazing initiatives you're about to read about are no less vital or impactful. I hope you enjoy reading about how much you've helped to achieve.

We will continue working with the world's most vulnerable people – women and girls living in poverty – to support them through this pandemic and help change their lives and the lives of those around them.

I also wanted to use this space to thank you for all the fantastic support we received for our Christmas campaign. I hope you enjoy reading about the difference your generosity has made to the lives of women and girls in displacement camps in Somaliland and Bangladesh. On pages 4-5 you'll hear directly from Hibo from ActionAid Somaliland, about how her team have been distributing essentials kits, supplying shelters and setting up women's coalitions. None of this important work would be possible without our wonderful supporters like you.

We are profoundly grateful for your invaluable support – particularly at this difficult and uncertain time, when it is more vital than ever. Thank you!



**Girish Menon**  
Chief Executive  
ActionAid UK  
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Cover photo credit: Gustavo García Solares/ActionAid



ActionAid Somaliland's Hibo Adam pictured in a camp for people displaced by drought.



## CLIMATE APPEAL

# From the frontline in Somaliland

**We're so grateful to our amazing supporters, who generously gave over £145,000 in response to our Christmas appeal. The 'She Can't Wait' campaign drew attention to the millions of girls around the world who are trapped in hidden crises caused by climate change, from the catastrophic drought in Somaliland to the unprecedented monsoon rains in Bangladesh.**

“In my role in ActionAid Somaliland's Humanitarian Team, I am on the ground, working directly with women and girls to provide support and save

lives. I work mainly in displacement camps for people struggling to survive the drought that's ravaging Somaliland – one of many climate change-driven emergencies affecting millions around the world.

Food in these overcrowded displacement camps is limited (mainly rice, sugar and flour) and there is a lack of clean water. There are next to no toilets, so most women and girls wait until it gets dark to go, exposing them to increased risk of sexual violence and attacks by wild animals like hyenas.

Thanks to the amazing generosity of people who supported ActionAid's Christmas appeal, my team and I have been providing essentials kits (containing items like soap, underwear, whistles and torches), building toilets and supplying temporary shelters.

We're also setting up, supporting and training women's coalitions in each camp, empowering women to take on decision-making roles. With their help, we're distributing cash transfers so that women can buy what they need for their families as quickly and cheaply as possible – including food, medicine, water and shelter.

I am exposed to all the horrors that drought can cause, but that doesn't prevent me from feeling hope at the same time.

In the face of this ongoing emergency, the courage and resilience of the women and girls I work with is astonishing. Every day, they are overcoming great odds to protect their families and care for others. And, last Christmas, together you showed them they are not alone. And for that I wholeheartedly thank you."

*Hibo Adam, ActionAid Somaliland*

## When an emergency strikes, your support can help provide:



### Essentials kits

Our essentials kits contain items like clothes, soap and clean underwear, so women can manage their hygiene and reduce their risk of disease. They also contain torches and whistles, so women can feel more secure in the camps.



### Cash transfers

Whether it's food, medicine, transport or other vital supplies, women can choose how they wish to spend their money. This makes cash transfers an empowering, simple and cost-effective solution.



### Climate-resilient farming training

Around the world we're training women and girls in sustainable, climate-resilient farming techniques, like using drought-resistant seeds and dam building. This helps them prepare for and cope with extreme changes in weather.

# ACTIONAID PRESENTS Women by Women

In April 2019, ActionAid launched a unique, year-long photographic campaign called *Women by Women*.

We partnered with six photographers in five countries we work in to bring a different perspective to the way women and girls living in poverty are represented – and to shine a spotlight on their incredible talent, which is so often overlooked.



Shamsia, a street artist in Kabul, Afghanistan.

“*Women by Women* gives us photographers the opportunity to feel part of our own stories and tell the stories of our own people.”

**Esther Mbabazi,**  
**Ugandan photographer.**

In March this year we curated the *Women by Women* exhibition at gallery@oxo in London’s South Bank, coinciding with International Women’s Day. *Women by Women* photographer Esther Mbabazi (from Uganda) was part of a panel which discussed the topic: “Who represents women and girls living in poverty, how and for whom?”

*Women by Women* is merely the beginning of a shift in ActionAid’s storytelling; it’s been the springboard for us to examine and reflect on our wider photographic identity. To see more of *Women by Women* visit: [voices.actionaid.org.uk/womenbywomen](https://voices.actionaid.org.uk/womenbywomen).

Photo credit: Miora Rajaonary/ActionAid



South African activist Nkeletseng Tsetsane.



Trailblazing Guatemalan hip-hop artist Rebeca Lane.



Rosa, a member of a women-only coffee collective in the Democratic Republic of Congo.



Cosy styles a friend's hair in her beauty salon in Kampala, Uganda.





Benson (second from the left) pictured with the patron and some members of the Boys for Menstrual Health club.

## UGANDA

"We used to make period jokes, but now we make period pads!"

When 11-year-old Benson was growing up, menstruation was a total mystery to him. "I am not proud to admit that as a boy I had very little understanding of periods," he says. "We thought the girls were dirty during their monthly cycle."

Benson says that he and his friends would make fun of the girls in his class if they bled through their clothes, and would joke that they had "slaughtered a hen". "Because of the fun we made of them and their embarrassment, many girls stayed away from school during their period," he says.

But when ActionAid Uganda came to his school as part of a child sponsorship initiative, everything changed.

ActionAid taught Benson and his classmates about the natural process of menstruation and how important it is to support – rather than tease – girls on their period. They also learned to make reusable sanitary pads.

"I was shocked to learn that the girls had to use old pieces of cloth which are not hygienic or comfortable," Benson says.

The training transformed the attitude of Benson and his friends so much that they decided to form a 'Boys for Menstrual Health' club. They meet every Wednesday to make pads and

have created a school garden where they grow vegetables to sell to help fund their activities. The club has been a huge success: they now have 45 boys and 30 girls as members.

This is just one example of the many amazing initiatives which are made possible by our child sponsors. With your support, we can work with entire communities living in poverty, including men and boys. They are fully included in our work so that together we can bring about lasting change and a more equal world.

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



Benson (kneeling on the left in a white t-shirt) with his schoolfriends following the pad-making training.



# Sarmin's story: How I escaped child marriage

“When I was 16, my father took me out of school and arranged for me to marry an older man against my will. This is the story of how I stopped my child marriage and now help other girls to do the same.”

Sarmin, 16, ended her own child marriage after attending a training scheme led by ActionAid Bangladesh.



"When I was 16, I had the opportunity to visit Dhaka, Bangladesh's capital, with a group of teenagers as part of a training scheme led by ActionAid Bangladesh. As someone from a small town who had never travelled, I jumped at the opportunity. During the programme we learned about gender equality, feminist leadership and the dangers of child marriage. It was fascinating.

When I returned to my town, I started telling others about what I had learned. However, many elderly people were not happy with my confidence and determination to confront the local norms. They spoke to my father and he decided to take

me out of school and marry me off to an older man to set me straight. When my father found a husband for me, he confiscated my phone and refused to let me leave the house. I was devastated; I wanted to finish school, have a job and lead my life independently.

**"To me, My Body Is Mine means that I will fulfil my own dreams before my parents' dreams."**

I managed to borrow a phone and called some friends and a teacher I trusted. With the help of a local

Sarmin featured in our #MyBodyIsMine campaign alongside Christie (below), a young activist in Nigeria.

headmaster they put enough pressure on my family and the people in my town to stop the plans for my marriage.

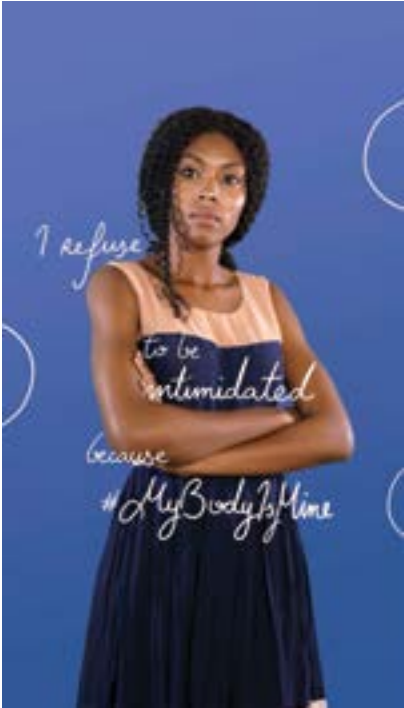
I am now 19 and a college student pursuing my dream of holding a government job. I also campaign against child marriage, educating others about the dangers of marrying young and encouraging them to keep studying. Since I put an end to my own child marriage, I have helped stop at least three other child marriages in my area and I hope to continue helping girls to reach their potential."



Sarmin training other young people in her area on the risks involved with child marriages.

**Sarmin is one of the four brave and inspiring women who featured in ActionAid's #MyBodyIsMine campaign. The campaign helps women and girls reclaim their bodies, speak out against any form of violence and proudly say My Body Is Mine without any fear of retribution.**

**Violence and injustice are not inevitable. That's why we're working to ensure every girl can claim her rights. But there are many more girls like Sarmin who urgently need our help. Please show your support for the campaign on social media using the #MyBodyIsMine hashtag or visit [actionaid.org.uk/get-involved/my-body-is-mine](http://actionaid.org.uk/get-involved/my-body-is-mine) for more information about getting involved.**



## POWER PROJECT

# When work doesn't always mean work

For lots of people, work means heading into an office and being paid for the time you spend there. But for just as many others, work can mean a full day spent cooking, cleaning and caring for others for absolutely no pay and often little recognition.

Despite not being regarded as traditional 'work', these tasks are no less exhausting, time-consuming – and important. Without unpaid care work, children wouldn't be in school, families would go hungry and houses wouldn't be clean.

The year may be 2020 but, shockingly, women and girls are responsible for 75% of unpaid care work around the world.\* This limits their opportunities to access an education and seek paid work, trapping them in a cycle of poverty. ActionAid's POWER (Promoting Opportunities for Women's Empowerment and Rights) project is seeking to reduce the time spent by women and girls on unpaid care work.

In Gaibandha, northern Bangladesh, local ActionAid staff have been running workshops where women and their husbands learn about the unfair burden of unpaid care work and are encouraged to share the load.

The POWER project supports women's groups to advocate to local and national governments to recognise and value unpaid care work, as well as time-saving initiatives, like building water sources close to homes and opening childcare centres.

Before she became involved in POWER, 27-year-old Aslema, pictured, was a housewife with no means of earning her own money. From morning to night, her day was taken up with domestic tasks, from cleaning the house to helping her children with their homework.

“If my husband and I divide our unpaid care work between us, then we can finish tasks sooner and focus on income-generating work together.”

Now, Aslema and her husband divide their tasks equally, which has given Aslema more time to work on her sewing business, join various local committees and get an office job. Having the time to earn an income has meant she can now pay for her children's education. “That is my biggest achievement,” she says.

Aslema holds a jar of seeds at her home in Gaibandha, northern Bangladesh.

\*<https://oecd-development-matters.org/2019/03/18/why-you-should-care-about-unpaid-care-work/>





Photo credits: ActionAid

'Tuseme' or 'Let Us Speak Out' theatre addresses issues faced by girls at school.

# PEOPLE'S POSTCODE LOTTERY

## Bringing about dramatic change

How a PPL-funded theatre programme is changing the lives of schoolchildren in Zimbabwe.

Since 2017, ActionAid UK has received more than £7.8 million from People's Postcode Lottery (PPL) for tackling the barriers to girls' education and responding to gender-based violence. We're already seeing the impact; PPL-funded work has enabled us to reach around 20,000 women and girls during the past 18 months alone. One PPL-funded initiative which is

changing the lives of thousands of schoolchildren is the 'Tuseme' or 'Let Us Speak Out' programme. This is a part of a project focused on girls' empowerment, implemented by ActionAid Zimbabwe.

The Tuseme programme uses theatre to address issues which hinder girls' social and academic

development, including child marriage, bullying, sexual violence and drug abuse. Through drama, song and creative arts, as well as sessions on negotiation, decision-making and leadership, girls gain useful skills and confidence in voicing their opinions.

The programme is also used to educate boys and help them understand their role in supporting and promoting gender equality as a human right.

In November 2019, a primary school in Chitungwiza, a town in northern Zimbabwe, put on a series of theatre performances using the Tuseme programme. The performances led to the formation of a Tuseme Club, where young people are given a platform to voice issues that concern them within the school and positively impact the school's culture.

They were recently successful in reversing a policy of having regular announcements naming the school's least-performing pupils.

By 2020, the Tuseme programme will have reached around 3,550 schoolchildren (2,500 girls and 1,050 boys), including 210 disabled children. None of this would be possible without the amazing support of People's Postcode Lottery players.

Sustainable change doesn't happen overnight. So, we are extremely grateful to have the invaluable long-term support of People's Postcode Lottery as well as our amazing regular supporters. Because of them, we can put in place the practices and policies which bring about lasting change.



Schoolchildren taking part in ActionAid Zimbabwe's 'Let Us Speak Out' empowerment programme.

# Fundraise at home!

During these uncertain times, we are relying on people like you to help us reach and support women and girls living in poverty – as they are particularly vulnerable to the pandemic and often don't have access to healthcare services. It might sound strange, but being stuck at home can actually bring about some great fundraising opportunities. Here are five fun and innovative ways in which you can still support ActionAid... from the comfort of your home!

## Bring out the **FUN** in fundraising!

### Hold an online quiz and raffle night



Host an online quiz and a virtual raffle. Charge £10 for your friends to play, with the winner taking home half the prize money and the other half going to ActionAid!

### Staying in is the new going out



Challenge your housemates to a *MasterChef* or *Come Dine With Me* competition! Charge everyone £5 to enter a dish, with the tastiest (or most attractive, if you want to hold the competition virtually) meal winning.

## Fun fact!

During the average work day, we spend more than £10 on breakfast, lunch, coffee and snacks.! Instead, £10 could provide a hygiene kit to a family and prevent the spread of coronavirus.

## Raise funds *and* keep fit



### Organise a fitness challenge

Charge your friends £3 each to take part in a fitness challenge, for example press-ups or squats. Get each competitor to film themselves doing as many repetitions of the exercise as they can. The person with the most repetitions can win a small prize (or simply have the glory!).

Share your virtual fitness challenge ideas on social media and tag @ActionAidUK for your chance to be featured on our channels.

### Complete your challenge distance



Being stuck at home doesn't mean you can't complete a 10k, or even a half-marathon! Get sponsored to run or walk on the spot or in a garden (if you have one!), tracking your progress using an app like Strava. You can also join up with friends with the aim of achieving a total distance between you.

## Make the most of your talents or hobbies

### Host a masterclass or offer tutoring

Whether you're a keen baker or a photography whizz, make the most of your talents and hobbies by teaching others your skills. Ask for a small donation in exchange for a one-on-one session or larger masterclass. Try and role in friends with special interests and expertise too!



For more ideas, visit [www.actionaid.org.uk/fundraiseathome](http://www.actionaid.org.uk/fundraiseathome)

### Fundraise online

Set up your own fundraising page on JustGiving so you can share your efforts with your family and friends, as well as tell them about ActionAid's work. Visit [justgiving.com/actionaid](http://justgiving.com/actionaid) for more information.



Thank you so much to everyone who is planning to support us during this period of uncertainty. None of our life-changing work could be achieved without our fantastic supporters and we hope you know how grateful we are to you.



“I’ve seen for myself how child sponsorship helps bring real change to communities.”

Photo credit: Gavin Smith/Eyevine/ActionAid



Fay during a trip to Tanzania with ActionAid in 2008.

## *Cold Feet* star Fay Ripley reflects on her time as a child sponsor

"When my daughter Parker turned seven, we started sponsoring Jamila – a child in Tanzania. Parker loved (and still loves!) sending and receiving updates and comparing notes on life in London versus life in the small village Jamila’s from.

Twelve years later, we continue to send letters to Tanzania. It’s been amazing learning how the lives of

Jamila and her community have changed because of ActionAid’s incredible work.

**For the price of just one takeaway coffee a week, my family and I have formed a real connection with someone on the other side of the world – and for that we are extremely grateful."**

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**Want to learn more about sponsoring a child with ActionAid? Visit [actionaid.org.uk/sponsor-a-child](https://www.actionaid.org.uk/sponsor-a-child).**