

# Action

Changing the world  
with **women and girls**

**act:onaid**

*She is  
the answer*




Inside, find out how  
we're working with  
women and girls in  
the fight against the  
climate crisis.

Makara, 14, helps her father to fish every morning before school. Pursat province, Cambodia.

Turn to **page 10** to find out about women, climate and our **She is the answer** campaign.



Photo credit: Cindy Liu/ActionAid

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## Welcome to your Spring 2021 edition of *Action* magazine!

In the almost 50 years since our founding, ActionAid has never been put to the test as we were in 2020.

As the new Chair of the Board of Trustees, I have been deeply impressed with ActionAid's perseverance in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic. In this new issue of *Action* magazine you will meet some of the inspiring people who, with your support, rose to the occasion last year, doing everything in their power to keep their communities safe from disease and disaster.

You'll also see how we're working to address one of the defining issues of our time, one that is causing immense disruption and destruction in many of the communities where we work: the climate crisis.

In many parts of the world, the changing climate is having a disproportionate impact on women and girls. As farms are devastated by floods, it is often women who are left without livelihoods. As severe storms or droughts force large-scale migration, women's safety is at risk. When schools are destroyed, girls miss out on education.

With your support, we are helping women and girls face the challenge of the climate crisis. In this issue, you will read about Women Champions, who are taking the lead in protecting their communities and building a sustainable future.

As our world faces mounting and unprecedented challenges, it is more vital than ever that we stand with women and girls. Thank you for all your kind support.



**Srabani Sen OBE**  
Chair of Trustees  
ActionAid UK

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Cover photo credit: Cindy Liu/ActionAid


# Disaster response: Beirut

## In the wake of a devastating explosion, ActionAid was there – thanks to you.

**On the afternoon of August 4, 2020, a gigantic explosion, originating in a dockside warehouse, ripped through the city of Beirut.**

The impact was devastating: more than 200 people were killed, 6,500 injured and an estimated 300,000 left homeless. All this in a country that was already struggling in the face of a massive global pandemic, political unrest and one of the worst financial crises in its history.

Marie Al Hajj, 37, lives in Beirut. She was in her living room with her children when the blast occurred. "I was sitting on the couch watching TV and chatting on my phone when all of a sudden I felt the house shake," she says. "A second later there was pressure and air and a strong sound and the glass shattered. I really thought a missile had hit my street. I got up, barefoot and ran over the broken glass, grabbed my kids and took them to the bathroom."



A view of the port, near the epicentre of the explosion.

actionaid.org.uk



Thanks to your support, ActionAid teams were working on the ground in the aftermath of the blast.

In the wake of the explosion, ActionAid Arab Region and our partner organisations in Beirut, like the Resource Centre for Gender Equality, went to work immediately, providing urgently needed aid and support to people like Marie whose lives had been turned upside down in an instant by this disaster.

According to Caroline McCausland, Director of ActionAid Arab Region, "People have been relocated to temporary shelters and family and friends' houses. In these new environments, unfortunately, women and girls face increased risk of gender-based violence and sexual assault."

However, the generosity of ActionAid's supporters made vital assistance possible in the days and weeks that followed. Along with our partners we set up a food service, provided emergency shelter and assisted with repairing and rebuilding homes.

ActionAid also made pioneering use of mobile technology to help people access the help they needed. "ActionAid is creating and distributing a new digital platform that coordinates the humanitarian responses of all our partner organisations," said Caroline McCausland. "This allows women and girls to know what services are available in their new locations." This is just one more example of how ActionAid is using cutting edge technology to keep women and girls safe. •



Marie, 37, whose windows were shattered in the explosion.



Volunteers like Barsha are bringing life-saving help to vulnerable people in Nepal.

“Even with everything going on around us, the main thing is to be strong and have self-strength. Because if we ourselves are not strong then we won’t be able to save others.”

## Protecting their communities How two women in Nepal kept their neighbours safe from Covid-19

When the Covid-19 crisis forced Nepal into lockdown, ActionAid volunteers Barsha and Nabina played key roles in keeping their vulnerable neighbours supplied with essentials and safe from the virus.

Barsha, 23, has been a volunteer for ActionAid for three years, having joined the coronavirus response after attending an ActionAid Nepal women’s leadership programme.

Her work on the frontline of ActionAid’s coronavirus response in Nepal has been life-saving. She has taught people to wash their hands and wear

masks. She also created lists of the most vulnerable people so they can receive vital support from ActionAid.

Barsha and her fellow volunteers often go the extra mile to reach those who may otherwise go without help. “There are many people with problems here,” she says. “Some can’t walk, some are pregnant and can’t work and

some are elderly. We knew what their situations were and we delivered the relief to their homes.”

Playing an active role through this work has brought about a change in how Barsha sees herself. “Serving the community makes me feel good. It has boosted my strength. People usually don’t like girls speaking out, but it is very important. We need to stand up. Now I talk a lot.”

“I have always wanted to go to places, reach communities and raise awareness, especially about issues related to women and girls.”

**Nabina**

Photo credit: Uma Bista / ActionAid



By spreading the word about the importance of masks and hand-washing, ActionAid volunteers like Nabina are fighting back against Covid-19.

Nabina, 21, has been volunteering with ActionAid partner HomeNet Nepal for around a year, collecting messages as part of the Child Sponsorship programme.



So many brave women like Nabina are stepping up to keep their communities safe, in the face of the pandemic.

When the Covid-19 pandemic began, Nabina began distributing essential items – including rice, lentils, sanitary pads, soap, toothpaste and oil – to daily wage workers, single women and those in financial difficulty.

Nabina finds this work extremely fulfilling. “I feel good being a part of such activities. It makes me happy. We can’t say exactly how many hours we work. We don’t realise the time passing.” She is also gaining a clearer sense of her life goals. “I want to become a social mobiliser and help the community and people,” she says.

Around the world, women are leading the response against Covid-19. Your kind donations are making all of this essential work possible. For updates on our response to Covid-19, check out our blog at [actionaid.org.uk/blog](https://www.actionaid.org.uk/blog).

Photo credit: Uma Bista / ActionAid

Women Rights Network members meet in Garissa, Kenya.

Photo credit: Judy Nuru/ActionAid

## Not This Girl

# Ending violence against girls and women in Kenya

How your generosity and matched funding from the UK Government are keeping women safe from abuse

**At ActionAid we are always looking for ways to do more – to make your support go further – and one of the best methods of doing this is to apply for UK Aid Match funding.**

Under this vital programme, the UK Government matches every donation we receive within a set period. This doubles your impact, allowing us to do twice as much to change the world with women and girls.

As you'll see on page 10, we have a project underway which has secured Aid Match support, but first we'd like to provide an update on our last successful UK Aid Match project, which focused on ending violence against women and girls in rural Kenya.

With our 2018 Not This Girl campaign, we set out to reach over 5,000 girls

and nearly 3,400 community members in rural Kenya, to bring lasting change by preventing gender-based violence. This ambitious three-year project will be coming to a close in October – thanks to your generosity, its impact has been remarkable.

Since the project started your support has helped to establish more than 50 Safe Spaces, where over 5,300 girls came to learn how to access support services and report violence. By the end of 2019 we had even created a special SMS platform where a survivor – or anyone who they trust – could send a free text message for help and to report violence against them. We also worked with village elders, religious figures and other community leaders to make changes in behaviours and attitudes to violence.

## Fighting for girls who have experienced violence

Bibian is a member of a Women Rights Network known as Sauti ya Wanawake (or 'The Voice of Women'). The network, supported by ActionAid with funds from our Not This Girl campaign, operates in six counties, championing women's issues and building women's confidence to advocate for change.

For Bibian, who works as a paralegal, the network has made a huge difference, not just with her confidence but with her understanding of how to work with women and girls who have experienced violence. "After attending seminars on women rights, I learnt that women have the right to inherit, to work, to worship and to be involved in family issues. Having been trained as a paralegal, I understand the process to follow on cases of violence against girls and I have the confidence to follow up on cases, to ensure that perpetrators are prosecuted and justice is served."

## Helping girls avoid early marriage

Ketra is 14 and dreams of becoming a teacher one day. Her dream was very nearly shattered. "Last year my father wanted me to get married in order for him and my family to get a dowry." This would have put an end to her schooling, and to her hopes for the future.

Through the Not This Girl project, however, Ketra had learned about the

serious issues related to early marriage. Instead of going along with her father's wishes she took a very brave step. "I reported the matter to Madam Maka [Kamuthe Women's Rights Network chairperson]. She reported to the chief." Soon, the authorities intervened and Ketra's father – threatened with court proceedings – agreed to back down.

Now, instead of being married at 14, Ketra is back in school and studying hard to make her dream come true.

**Turn over to read all about our new global project, funded by UK Aid Match, aimed at bringing women into the fight against the climate crisis.**



Not This Girl projects have reached;  
**8,976** people, including



**5,373**  
girls



**2,612**  
boys




**621**  
women



**370**  
men

Each is now trained and mobilised to raise awareness and help prevent violence against women and girls in their communities.



Chea, 38, a mother of six, has been a fisherwoman all her life.

# She is the answer

Supporting women in Cambodia who are on the front lines of the climate crisis

Chea lives in Cambodia, where her way of life – like that of many of her neighbours – is under threat from the looming climate crisis.

Rising floodwaters, devastating storms and terrible droughts are having a catastrophic effect on farming and fishing, forcing vulnerable people deeper into poverty and having an especially harsh effect on the lives of women and girls.

With the help of UK Aid Match funding, ActionAid is launching a major new project in Cambodia, one of the countries identified as being at greatest risk from the effects of climate change.

Every donation to our **She is the answer** campaign will be matched by the UK Government until 4 June. This is a rare and vital opportunity to ensure that women like Chea, instead of being marginalised and overlooked, can play a central role in keeping their communities safe.

With each passing year, ActionAid's work around the issue of climate becomes more and more important, and there are few countries where the situation is more urgent than in Cambodia.

This country is only responsible for around 0.06% of annual global carbon

emissions, and yet the damage its people – in particular its women – are facing from climate change is immense. The 2017 Climate Change Vulnerability Index ranks Cambodia between “High” and “Extreme” risk, making it one of the most climate-vulnerable countries in the world.

Socheat, 13, and her mother Chea, 38, have been hit hard by the impacts of climate change.



Photo credit: Cindy Liu/ActionAid

In so many ways, it is the women and girls of Cambodia who are bearing the brunt of the climate crisis. Livelihoods have been ruined by floods, storms and droughts destroying farms. There has also been an increased risk to the safety of women and girls as communities are forced to migrate away from the safety of home due to the threat of climate-related devastation.

To help fight this crisis, ActionAid is launching an ambitious programme in Cambodia. And thanks to UK Aid Match funding from the UK Government, every donation our supporters make to our **She is the answer** campaign will be matched. This gives us an exciting opportunity to make a lasting difference.

Together we can strengthen communities' resilience against climate change. Your support can help build physical defences against flooding, equip farmers with drought-resistant seeds, and train Women Champions.

Women Champions are women who receive training and coaching in order to become directly involved in addressing the climate crisis. With these confident, empowered women in leadership roles, pushing for change at the local and national level, Cambodia's future – in the face of a changing climate – will be transformed.

For too long, women have been absent from the spaces in which decisions are made around climate, but your support will help change that for good.

### You can help fisherwomen like Chea

Chea has been a fisherwoman all her life and her family has been hit hard by climate change. Over the last five years, she has noticed major changes in the weather patterns, which has had a big impact on her income and her ability to feed her six children.

“Last week, we could not go fishing for three or four days because the winds were too strong. Making ends meet has become more challenging. If we are unable to go fishing for a few days, we have no money to buy rice and food for our family. We have been living from hand to mouth.”

The effects of drought are also taking their toll on the fish stocks on which she depends. “There is a connection between the level of the water and decline of the fish population. There are fewer and fewer fish to catch,” she says.

Chea's story highlights the urgent need for action on climate, which is why your support of our **She is the answer** campaign is so vital. •

**Every £1 you donate will have £2 of impact thanks to UK Aid Match funding, so please give what you can at [actionaid.org.uk/she](https://actionaid.org.uk/she) before 4 June. Thank you.**



## Spreading the Message

# In Haiti, your support is helping women to get the word out about rights and safety



In a world where women's voices are all too often silenced, radio is a truly powerful medium through which they can be heard.

Shella Cayo lives in Haiti, a society where patriarchal norms remain firmly entrenched. She and her friend Marjorie Colo are working to change all that. The pair co-host a weekly feminist radio show on a station called Radio Foré, run by ActionAid's partner CROSS, that focuses on women's rights and gender equality.

On a radio station run by an ActionAid partner, Shella is speaking out about women's rights.

"I am determined to fight for the cause using the media. I fight to achieve the awareness of women so they can know their worth, their rights and the need for them to include themselves in everything that happens in their community."

Shella Cayo

**Q: Why is radio, and community radio in particular, such a powerful means of helping women in Haiti?**

A: Traditional radio shows work according to our current system, and the current system is not in favor of women. Community radio plays the role of a popular educative tool to the people, to reform them and help them re-evaluate themselves and ask whether the type of society we have is adequate or not.

**Q: How did the arrival of Covid-19 affect the lives of women in your community?**

A: In every social crisis, the first affected are usually the women. Firstly because of their vulnerability and secondly because of their financial means. In [Haiti's] case, the women are the providers of the households. They are exposed to many risks related to the disease because they are using public spaces, with lots of people. The second aspect is that [some are] staying home in a house with domestic violence.

**Q: What is the connection between the pandemic and domestic violence?**

A: With fewer hours at work and companies shut down, domestic violence is most likely to occur when you spend more time in a home where it exists. The man sees you more, conflicts may arise because the man is also stuck at home, so it is very likely that there will be violence in the household.

**Q: How are you using your radio show to make a difference?**

A: We want to fight to achieve awareness, so that women can know their worth, their rights, the need for them to include themselves in everything that happens in the community. We want to emancipate women, so they can fight to free themselves from the situations they are living.

**Your kind support of ActionAid is ensuring that women like Shella all over the world are able to speak out for gender equality and an end to violence. •**





Kailash, 12, and his family received food parcels.

# Reaching out, even in lockdown The generosity of our child sponsors is changing – and saving – lives during the pandemic.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the support from child sponsors has helped keep children and communities safe.

In many of the countries where ActionAid works, the virus has had a devastating effect on lives and livelihoods. Thanks to our kind child sponsors, we have been able to keep communities informed about hygiene, safe from illness and provided basic essentials in the face of job losses and scarcity.

In Nepal, Kailash, age 12, is one such sponsored child, he lives with his mother and three sisters. His father sadly passed away just before the pandemic while working in India. Kailash travelled there to see him and then had to quarantine on returning to his village.



He says, "It was really difficult for me to understand what was happening. I would always worry, will I be able to see my sisters again? Will I be able to be back in school and play with my friends like before? Will I be able to fight this virus?"

Luckily he remained healthy. ActionAid made sure he knew the best ways to keep from catching Covid-19 – handwashing, distancing and mask wearing. After 14 days he returned home. "The joy of being home and meeting all my three little sisters was really thrilling. I cannot express my feelings in words," he says.

The generosity of child sponsors also meant ActionAid could provide Kailash's family with hygiene essentials and food, since they had no way to buy them. "I would like to thank ActionAid on behalf of all the families who has been able to survive this pandemic with their support," says Kailash.

On the other side of the world, in the small mountain community of Pasacuach, in Guatemala, 79 boys and girls benefitted from our partner organisation Vivamos Mejor, which used funds from kind ActionAid child sponsors to buy hygiene kits for every child in the village.

These gifts made a big difference – not only did they remind the children and their families that they were not alone, that someone cared, they also helped fight the spread of Covid-19 in this community.



Walter, 8, and sister Irma, 9, using their hygiene kits.

Eight-year-old Walter was especially happy with his toothbrush. "I'm very thankful to my friend for this gift," he said. "It is going to be very useful. I feel very happy to be part of the [Child Sponsorship] programme."

Irma, who is nine, was also delighted with her hygiene kit. "I want to send regards to my friends," she said. "It makes me happy to know they love us very much. Thank you for being good people." •

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



# Fundraise for ActionAid and double your impact!

£1 = £2

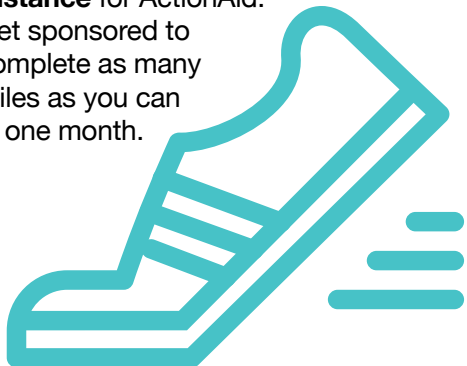
Right now, everything you raise until 4 June will be matched pound for pound by the UK Government, making your generosity go even further. This is part of our **She is the answer** appeal, helping women and girls adapt to the climate crisis before it is too late.



## Here are a few ideas for how you could get involved...

### Get active

Taken up running, walking or cycling during lockdown? Turn your new hobby into a challenge and **Go the Distance** for ActionAid. Get sponsored to complete as many miles as you can in one month.



### Celebrate

Does your birthday fall between now and 4 June? You could ask friends and family for donations instead of gifts – the icing on the cake is that everything you raise will be doubled!



### Give it up!

Are you a chocoholic, avid gamer, or Netflix binger? Would you give it up to raise money? Or could you reduce your carbon footprint to help combat climate change?

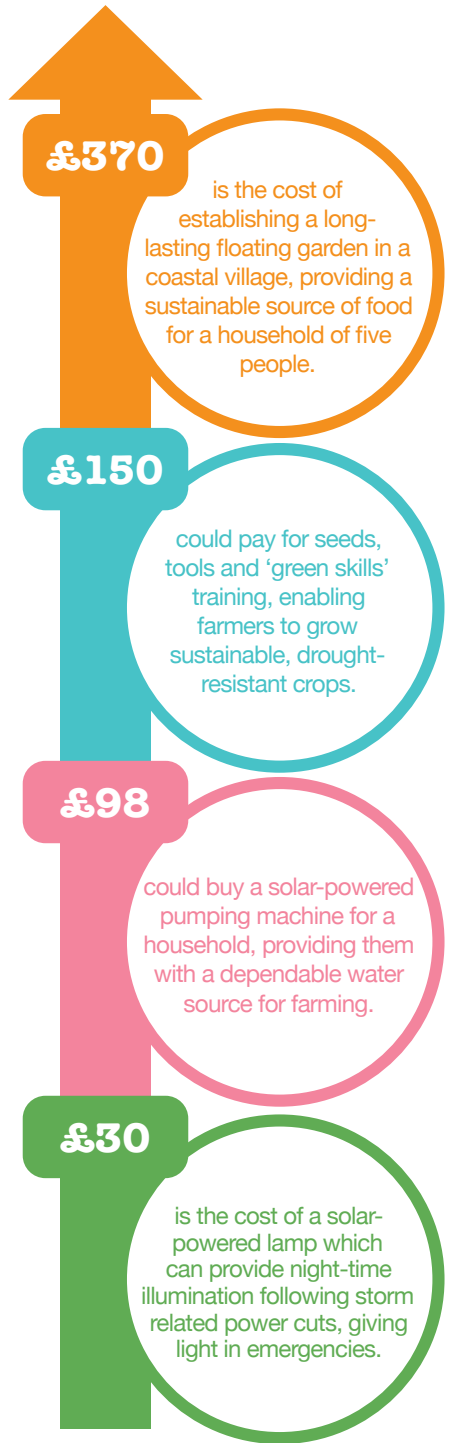


### Match me if you can

**Make a personal donation** to ActionAid and share it on social media with friends and family. Ask them to **#MatchMeIfYouCan** to help fight climate change.



We have lots more weird and wonderful fundraising ideas on our website to help give you that extra bit of inspiration. Check them out at [actionaid.org.uk/fundraise](https://www.actionaid.org.uk/fundraise) or email [events@actionaid.org](mailto:events@actionaid.org) – we'd love to hear from you!



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# Gifts in Action

Life-changing gifts for any occasion

**Discover ActionAid's unique gifts and help to change the lives of women and girls living in poverty.**

With **24 unique gifts** to choose from, starting at just £10, we have everything from goats to PPE – so there's something for everyone you love.



Scan the QR code or visit  
**[giftsinaction.org.uk](http://giftsinaction.org.uk)**