



Stories of Change

2012 Annual Report



Farmers from the Batwa minority in Karusi, Burundi, one of the provinces in which AcitonAid works to help the community improve its access to basic amenities and education.
Credit: ActionAid

Stories of Change

This year we asked each country in the Federation to share some 'stories of change' from 2012, to illustrate their impact during the year. This is a selection, demonstrating work towards all of our Key Change Promises (KCPs).

Afghanistan

Community worker Rukhshana, from Sheberghan, Afghanistan, believes women's empowerment is the most significant change brought about by ActionAid Afghanistan, and that cooperatives are a crucial part of this, enabling women in her village to regulate the carpet industry. Rukhshana recently became vice-chairperson of a newly established cooperative, and under her leadership women in the village now access the credit they need to fund their small businesses. In the past, buyers told women their carpets were substandard in order to acquire them at artificially low prices, so the cooperative started marketing carpets and farm products itself to ensure producers get fair prices. "Things are changing slowly and people have started to admire women's efforts," says Rukhshana. "The fact that I am a social leader in the village, an almost impossible thing for an unmarried [Muslim] woman, is due to the project. From my example, you can see how much the project has contributed to empowering rural women. Cooperatives are a sort of marthumi (people's bank) in our village, people regard them as rays for hope," says Rukhshana. "Our cooperative takes land documents or property as collateral before giving out a loan to a member. We are developing a pro-poor policy so that more poor women will have access of service."

Australia

In 2012, ActionAid Australia, in partnership the Australian Foundation for the Peoples of Asia and the Pacific, brought the reality of Kenyan women farmers' lives to Australia through a photography competition and exhibition – Exposing Hunger: Capturing Solutions. The competition generated wide participation, attracting over 6,000 visitors to the competition website and over 100 photographic submissions. Winner, Lani Holmberg, visited ActionAid Kenya and AFAP in Zimbabwe, developing a series of powerful images and case studies to convey the human face of food insecurity and the challenges faced by communities in Kenya and Zimbabwe. Lani uploaded video diaries and posted blogs throughout her journey, capturing reflections of the communities she met. On return, an exhibition was organised to coincide with World Food Day – more than 200 people attended the events, and in a follow up survey, 70% of respondents said the exhibition inspired them to find out more about ActionAid's work, leading them to have discussions with their networks about our work with small-holder farmers and our food security programmes.

Bangladesh

In Chanpara Slum, Narayangan, Dhaka, women suffer extreme discrimination, so in July 2011 ActionAid Bangladesh set up a Reflect circle to help women become aware of their rights. Initially they identified scarcity of drinking water and poor drainage as their main problem, and called on local government for access to safe drinking water and installation of proper drainage system for 45,000 local people. When

this request was shelved, circle members put their demand to the local authorities, with the result that the local MP finally agreed to provide them with eight submersible pumps to serve the community. “Previously community participants had to buy safe drinking water – for household use, they used water from the river,” said Hawa. “Now I have time on my hands after doing household activities because I don’t have any tension to collect water from different sources. Now I’m thinking to start livelihood for earning.” MP Golam Dastogir Gazi said: “I am pretty impressed to see this collective effort and their courage to change their community. For their effort, approximately 2,500 people of the community will benefit during the rainy season.”

Brazil

In 2012, 10 million people suffered north-east Brazil’s worst drought in 40 years. ActionAid Brazil helped 5,000 affected people in Mirandiba and Carnaubeira da Penha, drilling wells to help them cope with the emergency. Water supply in this region can be highly political, with votes sometimes exchanged for water services during drought. In May 2012, ActionAid Brazil’s local partner Conviver prepared an emergency plan to expand access to water, conducting community meetings to get local people’s input. The project became a model for municipal and state levels, and was presented at a seminar organised in the community of Tiririca. Representatives from 10 other communities learned about the project and how it was managed. Quirino Cleocimar, 33, a mother of four in Quirino, Mirandiba, said, “The well is great because it’s good for us and for the animals. It allows us to plant and generate income in this year of drought. Before there was a lot of health problems because the water we drank were from a water hole was also used by animals directly. Then the children had illnesses they suffered a lot with tummy ache. Now we do not worry because the well

is water that comes from the earth, distilled, we know that the water is clean, it is a vein that comes from the hills, has no sewerage, there’s nothing dirty close by.”

Burundi

In Burundi, ActionAid helped small farmers form a network to boost yields and produce enough to eat and sell. Against a backdrop of climate change, lack of inputs and cultivable land, grants were given to the networks to empower women in particular. Training sessions on rights, grant management and leadership were provided, and issues around women’s rights violations were aired. One of the worst violations was polygamy, as the state policy of registering marriages was not being fully implemented. It was important to involve local authorities in supporting women in their fight against polygamy, and Reflect facilitators, official community leaders, municipality representatives and 40 local people were trained to identify illegal marriages. Marriage legalisation is now a reality and will address many issues that undermined local planning in the past, including protecting the rights of women who separate from their husbands, and the rights of children born outside of marriage. It will also improve the reliability of population data, on which measuring progress towards targets such as the Millennium Development Goals depends.

Cambodia

ActionAid Cambodia began its ‘safe city’ work, raising women’s awareness of their rights to freedom from violence, decent work, improved health and living conditions, and protection mechanisms to prevent violence. In 2012, ActionAid Cambodia conducted a safety audit on urban public services with the Workers’ Information Center, identifying problems faced in the workplace and during the women’s daily journeys to and from work; as well as the level of public services workers have access to in



Heang, who lives in Prey Tea area, where ActionAid and the Workers' Information Center look closely at the safety and security of women garment workers outside the factory.
Credit: Savann Oeurm/ ActionAid

the city. “I am very afraid to walk back from the factory at night time,” says Chakrya Brem, 20, who lives in Prey Tea community. Sok Dyna, a drop-in facilitator in Prey Tea community shared her concern. “Safety is not good for people, even at the workplace. The distance between the factory and people’s houses is a problem because there is no street lighting, and the electricity where I live often cuts out. Discussions, workshops and campaigns about garment workers have largely focused on demanding decent working conditions and better salaries for the workers. But when we ask about what goes on beyond the factory floor, the women are slow to respond.” The safety audits allowed women to discuss their environments, imagine a violence-free life and identify the changes they want to see to make their community safer. Safe cities for women is one of the key national campaigns of ActionAid

Cambodia, which has brought the issue to the attention of the Ministry of Women Affairs and Relevant Development Partners.

China

When ActionAid phased out its work in Huaian County, Hebei Province, a group of small farmers, inspired by ActionAid, established the Yi Dun Qing Community Development Association (YDQ), which is now an ActionAid partner. With support from ActionAid, YDQ set up an organic demonstration garden to promote sustainable, low-input farming, and organised training, exposure visits and exchange meetings for local farmers to enable communication with local government, consumer groups, academic institutions and civil society. ActionAid China provided training on local law and capacity building for organising and management, and facilitated the forming core group, assembly

meeting and board meetings. In 2012, with support from ActionAid China, YDQ organised a farmers' conference on sustainable agriculture and safe food, inviting farmers, academics, government officials, activists, consumers, business people and citizens to meet and exchange experiences and challenges. Local government heard small farmers' voices. Yue Jianjun, a farmer from Zhangjiatun, said, 'now I have more confidence about what I'm doing and YDQ is doing. I believe we can make better life with everyone's efforts.'

Democratic Republic of Congo

ActionAid Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) used the country's guide for national development – a little-known plan devolving power to local provinces and territories to implement initiatives supporting the 'economic development of their communities' – as a powerful tool for improving government accountability and community participation. This year it started to engage government

authorities and civil society organisations in Kinshasa Province to ensure that Kisenso territory – where ActionAid DRC's new LRP has been established – benefits from the national development plan. While most local government authorities and civil society organisations were not aware of the plan, the commune of Kisenso, especially its development committee, nevertheless committed to formulating a Kisenso development plan. ActionAid supported the process and linked with other potential stakeholders, including UN agencies and international NGOs.

Denmark

ActionAid Denmark's 2012 Tour de Future campaign created awareness and political pressure around the Rio+20 summit, mobilising people to participate in a bicycle caravan that began in the north of the country and finished outside parliament in Copenhagen. The 27-stage caravan clocked up 40 cities, 1,000 kilometres, 400 media clips and five different



Young people in Goma, DRC, have a bigger say in their education, and can access technology and better educational facilities with the support of ActionAid.

Credit: ActionAid



Abeba Semere, 17, was helped by the ActionAid-supported Women's Watch Group in her village to avoid an arranged marriage and continue her education.
Credit: ActionAid

Danish ministries. Through this we made Rio+20 a higher priority issue in Danish politics, raising awareness among over 6,000 people and making ActionAid Denmark a reliable and relevant source of information for both media and decision-makers. During the summit in Brazil, ActionAid Denmark successfully lobbied Danish delegates, and when the Danish PM spoke at the summit, she flagged Danish support for a global tax on financial transactions.

Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, women took action on land rights as part of an ongoing ActionAid awareness-raising initiative, which, with the support of local government, has been instrumental in organising the village's Women's Watch Group (WWG). For two years the group has advocated for women's rights to property, and the eradication of violence against women, bringing perpetrators of violence to court and helping women get justice. This year they helped Alemnesh Adeladay, 20, who lives in Deresige Kebele Mekori village. "My father died seven years ago, when I was 13. After his death, taking responsibility to raise us

children fell solely on my mother's shoulders... However, it was very hard to make ends meet, especially after our farm land, our sole source of livelihood, was snatched by our neighbour," says Alemnesh. "My mother tried many times to get our farm land back, appealing to traditional leaders in the community and to the Kebele [village] government administration and Kebele social court, who were not interested to help." Alemnesh took action after a WWG awareness raising programme where she heard about women's rights to property and land, and the laws protecting those rights. She took the case to WWG chairperson who galvanised collective action – all supported by ActionAid. "Our family finally got back the farm land after seven years and our living standard improved gradually, thanks to the WWG members and the support they have given to our family," says Alemnesh.

France

In 2012, PSO and ActionAid India partner organisation Ekta Parishad mobilised tens of thousands of people for the Jansatyagraha, a 350 km March for Justice to the capital Delhi to ask the government for fairer distribution of

land, especially for women. In the build-up to the march, PSO selected and trained volunteer ‘food sovereignty’ ambassadors to undertake awareness raising and campaigning activities, and invited Lilly Kutty from Ekta Mahila Manch – the women’s branch of Ekta Parishad – to visit its local groups all over France. Local solidarity marches were organised by eight local groups in France, raising awareness about access to land in India. Our local groups organized more than 60 events in all regions of France and thousands of Urgent Appeals were sent to the Prime Minister and the French Deputies. The march produced two major successes – the commitment to drafting national agrarian reform within six months and the adoption of a legal provision to give arable land to the landless and habitable land to the homeless. The agreement also mentions mechanisms to implement these commitments.

Ghana

ActionAid helped parents in Tain, Ghana, to influence the distribution and training of teachers in deprived parts of their community, with the result that the Ghana Education Service agreed to post more nursery teachers and plan general in-service training for untrained teachers. This was the result of work by district Parent-Teachers’ Association (PTA) networks – formed as a direct result of ActionAid’s work in the community – to encourage prioritising the Right to Quality Trained Teachers, on which they conducted a survey after agreeing indicators to measure quality teaching and learning, and teacher numbers. Findings were presented at a forum including the District Chief Executive, the local MP, Education Directorate, local schoolchildren, parents, traditional authorities and media, and a committee was set up by the network to follow up on recommendations from the forum. In November 2012, the network organised a platform for four prospective MPs on how they would respond to proposals for

solving the issue of inadequate numbers of quality of teachers.

Greece

The first year of its national strategy was a time of change for ActionAid Hellas, with the 3-day multi-media exhibition Walk in My Shoes being the most visible example of this. The event was one of the biggest staged under the new organisational structure, and the first to engage the most committed supporters as main hosts. Walk in My Shoes involved child sponsors who had been on solidarity and immersion trips guiding 750 visitors on an “experiential trip” to Pokot, Kenya, explaining how people’s human rights are denied, and the hardship of everyday life. Hosts and visitors shared ugali, and carried baskets filled with dirty water. Child sponsors also shared their life-changing experience and called their audience to action. Supporters reflected the theme of “taking it personally”, the title of ActionAid Hellas’ new national strategy. Walk in My Shoes was a clear example of the synergy between marketing and supporter services, campaigns and communication, generating 50 new Child Sponsorships, 200 petitions against biofuels, a visit by the Mayor of Athens, 89 media clippings and €6,000 raised via an e-shop.

Guatemala

ActionAid Guatemala’s partner organisation, Women’s Association New Horizons, continued to work for women’s rights in Chisec, and in particular to combat violence against women. During 2012 ActionAid Guatemala organised talks to sensitise 29 groups of boys, girls, young women and men from 29 communities, and produced a booklet addressing the cause and effects of violence, where to go for support, and the laws against violence against women. In addition, radio broadcasts related to non-violence against women went out on three radio stations over a period of six months. Catalina Xol,



Children in Dugshegu, Ghana, use solar lanterns supplied by ActionAid to help them study in the evenings. Credit: ActionAid

59, lives with her husband in San Pedro Limon: “I wake up at 4 in the morning and go to the mill to make dough, to prepare my husband’s breakfast, I begin to prepare the food while I listen to the radio and I have heard ActionAid’s messages on Radio Pocola and La Buena, I like them because they are in our Q’eqchi’ language so I understand them. They are on Respecting Women, they tell us women what to do if we suffer violence, where to denounce it and to not stay quiet. ActionAid has helped us much not just with community projects but also with training, I have learned about my rights as a woman, about our health and this campaign of Non-Violence in Chisec has been good because every day we learn something new, because if I

see a woman being hit I can advise her, since we all help one another.”

Haiti

Philippeaux is a poor community in Haiti’s capital, Port au Prince, made up of makeshift homes on steep hillsides with no drainage. As such it is prone to floods and landslides, and even before the 2010 earthquake was in an almost-permanent state of emergency, with the rainy and hurricane seasons bringing death and destruction, and leaving families to start over from scratch. This year, ActionAid Haiti and partner organization COZPAM completed a three-year construction programme worth US\$90,000, working alongside Phillippeaux



Residents in Phillipeaux construct an anti-flood gully in their community, reducing the risk of their homes being washed away.
Credit: ActionAid

residents to create banks and channels to control the water. Weekly rotas of 50 workers were paid to construct a gully, enabling rainwater to drain away, preventing homes and tents being engulfed in debris, and providing much-needed income. The project is already contributing to wellbeing in Philippeaux, providing protection during Hurricane Sandy. Mrs. Bernard Pierre, a Philippeaux resident said: "Before the gully, the floods would bring mountains of dirt and garbage in front of us. This gully changed the whole community. After the passage of Sandy we have no dead people and no damages to homes. That's a miracle for us here, especially when you hear what this bad weather has done to other parts of the country. If we did not have this gully, I am sure we would have lost lives. For this I thank ActionAid and COZPAM."

India

ActionAid India helped launch the 'City Spaces' campaign, highlighting issues faced by deprived urban communities and building their capacity to assert their rights. As a result, in the relocation settlement of Kannagi Nagar, which comprises of 15,565 houses, 68 committees facilitated local residents' access to social security and basic amenities. Two new Integrated Child Development Services centres were set up in the settlement, improvements were made in the water supply and transport facilities, and roads and street lights were installed. Work with homeless people resulted in the formation of the Dr Ambedkar Homeless People's Federation, which this year obtained entitlements such as voter IDs, ration cards, birth and death certificates, old age pensions and widows' pensions for 1,297 homeless people.

Ireland

ActionAid Ireland launched its new website, social media presence and blogging strategy in 2012, increasing traffic, Facebook fans

and Twitter followers by over 100%. We also started sending out regular email updates to our supporter database on a weekly basis to build awareness, drive traffic and increase donations. The style and content of messaging changed significantly, reflecting both a human-rights based approach and a strong focus on women's rights issues, providing supporters and the general public with the opportunity to learn more about ActionAid Ireland's work on and support for women's rights. For example on International Women's Day (IWD) 2012 ActionAid invited Irish women celebrities to inspire others by sharing their favourite quote. ActionAid posted and tweeted on the hour, every hour on IWD with quotes, stories and blogs about inspiring women and their challenges. We did radio interviews too and created a fantastic social media buzz on the day. Some 2,648 Facebookers saw ActionAid Ireland in their news feed on IWD, 226 people engaged with the content we posted, and 111 'liked' us on the day.

Italy

In March 2012, ActionAid Italy launched a public petition asking the Minister of Environmental Affairs to ensure the EU and Italy stop production and consumption of biofuels. ActionAid Italy published two case studies on Italian biofuel investments in Senegal and their negative impacts on local communities, in particular on access to food, land and natural resources. Almost 17,000 signatures were collected, bringing the voice of Italian supporters directly to the minister who agreed to meet a group of ActionAid Italy representatives. Other affiliates in Europe worked on similar petitions, collecting more than 44,000 signatures in total, which were delivered to European Commission and European Parliament representatives. This lobbying work will lead to an expected review of the EU directive on renewable source of energy taking place in 2014.



Street vendors and homeless people near Delhi, India, were helped to get official identity papers by ActionAid, enabling them to claim their state entitlements.
Credit: ActionAid

Kenya

This year ActionAid Kenya supported micro-irrigation schemes in Ngogithi community, Kieni, enabling communities and farmers to produce crops all year round. Like other parts of Kieni, Ngogithi had traditionally experienced frequent droughts, leading to the drying up of water points and women and girls having to walk up to 6km to fetch water. But this landmark human rights-based water project, which began in 2006, successfully galvanised the community and collaborated with (and leveraged funds from) a number of government institutions and a corporate agency to rehabilitate and deliver the piped water system to 150 households (900 people). The final implementation of the project in January 2012 was the culmination of several years' work, and has seen the construction of a 16km pipeline, providing the community

with clean and safe water for both domestic and irrigation purposes on their door steps for all-year round production, and meaning women and girls no longer had to travel long distances to fetch water.

Lesotho

Nthabeleng, 15, is at primary school in rural Lesotho – a country where gender-based violence is accepted as the norm, making girls vulnerable to sexual abuse, early pregnancy and HIV and AIDS. ActionAid Lesotho and its partners have been working to build women and girls' consciousness about their human rights so that the girls are empowered from an early age to understand their rights. Nthabeleng participated in training at a girls' forum. "I now have a clear understanding of my rights as a girl," she says. "From the training organised for

our school by ActionAid I learnt that I have a right to privacy and that just like the boys I have the right to be respected and say no to any violence against women. The information I got from the training will help me be strong-willed and resist temptations, protect myself against abuse and also it has helped me understand that sexual abuse is dangerous and can also lead to HIV and AIDS infection. It will also help me to inform other girls in my community that we should not keep quiet but report violence actions so that we protect ourselves and other people.”

Liberia

In Liberia, sexual harassment by school teachers is rampant, and girls’ forums are engaging school authorities to change the situation. Using ActionAid’s ‘promoting rights in schools’ approach, schoolgirls engaged with the District Education Officer (DEO) to challenge the violations. Fatumata, a member of the forum explains: “After the trainings and coaching from ActionAid, we understood what it meant to have a safe and non-violent education environment. During our meetings, problems facing girls in school were identified, action points were generated and a statement written to document

forth coming issues.” Physical assaults and sexual harassment by teachers who normally go with impunity took centre-stage during the discussions. “Teachers are insulting and sexually harassing female students and are going free with it.” Fatumata says the forum developed a position statement and presented it to the DEO as they were not seeing any action from teachers or the school administration. “We developed our statement and gave it the DEO showing all the issues and the names of teachers who abused us and cited instances of those abuses. The DEO was happy and assured us of appropriate actions to be taken. He also encouraged us to continue reporting cases of violence and abuse at school.”

Malawi

In 2012, ActionAid piloted the Promoting Rights in Schools Framework in Kamkhate, Malawi – a community where educational facilities and teaching standards were poor. Pupils, parents, school committees, chiefs, teachers, and members of the Teachers Union of Malawi were reminded of the Charter of 10 [educational] Rights, and after assessing their school against the rights to free and compulsory education, adequate infrastructure and transparent



Bwetu children’s centre, near Lilongwe in Malawi, built with the support of ActionAid and the Roger Federer Foundation.
Credit: Paul Wu/ActionAid

and accountable schools, they discovered communities were not participating in school development. This particularly affected 9-10 year-olds who had to travel up to 7kms a day when they reached Standard 5. All agreed to take action and within three weeks villagers had started moulding bricks. By August 2012, Kamkhate had 200,000 bricks fired. ActionAid further facilitated a meeting where the MP and District Council promised – in the spirit of instilling sense of responsibility – to build a school block each if the communities moulded bricks as contribution. By September, the MP had facilitated the old concrete and corrugated school shelter to become a completed school block, the local Primary Education Advisor allocated two female teachers, and the school put an improvement plan in place.

Mozambique

In Zambézia, Mozambique, women are seen only as food providers for the family. In cases of divorce or widowhood, they lose all possessions and rights, and in some cases are sent away from home with the children. ActionAid, through the Wollar project, disseminated information on land and family laws, raising communities' awareness of women's rights and reducing violence against women. Carlinda Calcão is the President of the Women's Forum of Impaca. "I participated in four trainings organised by ActionAid about land and family laws, and we started the dissemination to other communities. During the work we confirmed what we already knew – those women in the community, especially the widows, were deprived of their rights. In 2011 we had training on gender, where one of the things we learned was that both women and men have equal rights and there was no separation of tasks by gender – it was then where we had the idea of creating the Women's Forum of Impaca." The Forum works in coordination with community courts which were also trained on family law by ActionAid.

Since its establishment last year, the forum has collected and sent 65 cases of violence against women to court, with 50 cases resolved with a ruling in favour of women.

Myanmar

"We need to put women's leadership at the centre of everything," says Daw May Win Myint, who has devoted 20 years to the cause of democracy in Myanmar. As a key member of Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy, she spent over 11 years locked up for the crime of 'youth organisation'. Yet she freely confessed to feeling 'extremely nervous' before the first training session she'd ever received in her life – a course on Women's Leadership, organised by ActionAid Myanmar in partnership with the British Council. "The course totally changed my attitude to the work I do. Now I see that women's rights have to be put at the centre of everything. If someone comes to us with an environmental issue, for example, I first ask 'How will this affect women?'" The Woman's Leadership course is part of a larger project called Women Participation in Public life, designed to give women in Myanmar the tools they need to take part leadership positions in business, government and politics and the legal system – areas in which they have traditionally taken second place to men. "We learned how to speak with confidence in public, to use strong body language and hand gestures to make sure our point is heard," says May Win Myint. This year she started putting her training to work in her new role as an MP – she entered Myanmar's national parliament in July alongside 41 other representatives of the NLD party, including Aung San Suu Kyi.

Nepal

Nepal's government provided 48-year-old Gaya Parasad Tharu, a freed bonded labourer, with 18,225 sq feet of land, but it wasn't enough for him to feed his family all year round, or pay

Bisnu Tharu, 40, and her husband Silakhu grow vegetables and rear pigs with the help of ActionAid-supported Radha Krishna Tharu Janasewa Kendra – an organisation working for the development of freed Kamaiya (former bonded labourers) in Bardiya district, Nepal.

Credit: Nayantara Gurung Kakshapati/ActionAid



his children's school fees. "This changed when ActionAid came to our village," he says. "They proposed to open up a farmers' cooperative group. The concept was that the farmers' group would do vegetable farming in a large agricultural field. It would be run and managed by the group of farmers from our village and the earnings from the sales would then be used to take out loans to open further businesses." ActionAid provided the group with seasonal and off season vegetable farming training, and training to manage the coop. "The cooperative grew over the years, accumulating more and more income for the members. The members have taken out loans and started their own businesses like small retail shops, pig and goat rearing and chicken farming. We are 25 families in this village called Tepari and all of us are able to eat properly, attend proper health care services and meet the education expenses of our children. ActionAid also taught us to lobby with the government for our rights as freed Kamaiyas. We submitted a proposal in the district agricultural development office and received NRs 145,200 (€1357) for installing two ground water boring pipes for irrigation in

the vegetable farm. We are now independent, self-sufficient and happy. Our group today has NRs 1,475,000 (€ 14,047.62) in its account. We grow various kinds of seasonal and off season vegetables and even the wholesalers from neighbouring villages in India come to buy our produce."

Netherlands

ActionAid Netherlands continued its We Won't Accept Hunger campaign, raising awareness of the challenges of women smallholder farmers in Africa and the need to invest in them to fight poverty. To increase campaign outreach, eight Dutch women farmers were invited to become campaign ambassadors, to attend ActionAid Netherlands' training, and to visit women farmers supported by ActionAid in Malawi and Uganda. They went to local communities, spoke to women farmers and officials to get a better understanding of the challenges they face on a daily basis and came home to share experiences and concerns. The women did interviews in national and local newspapers and magazines, made presentations at national events, hosted 'African dinners'



Four Dutch women farmers travelled to Uganda as core-ambassadors for the European ActionAid campaign We Won't Accept Hunger. In this campaign the Dutch women are acting as spokespersons in emphasizing the important role small scale women farmers play in tackling hunger.

Credit: Thomas White/
ActionAid



Naseem was affected by the 2010 floods in Pakistan, but, with the support of ActionAid, she now runs a small shop.
Credit: Umar Farooq/ActionAid

where they invited guests to learn more about the challenges of smallholder farmers and encouraged them to become ambassadors themselves.

Nigeria

In Gwalada, a suburb of Nigeria Federal Capital Territory, most people depend on agriculture for their livelihood. But poor access to agricultural inputs resulted in poor yields, and processing the yield – particularly maize planted by women farmers – was a challenge, as the entire community had access to only one maize grinding machine, owned by an individual who charged exorbitant prices to use it. This resulted in loss of produce, as often the maize went unprocessed. The community found support from ActionAid Nigeria partner Society for Community Development (SCD). After capacity building in advocacy and management skills, the farmers formed a cooperative and met the Councillor of the Abuja Municipal Area Council to discuss their challenges – particularly in

food processing. Following the meeting, the community was provided with a maize grinding machine which now serves more women in the community. For Haruna Musa, president of the farmers group, this was no mean feat, and the standard of life of the community members has since improved. “SCD and ActionAid helped us to organise ourselves into a group and we can now discuss issues concerning the challenges of our farms, and now we do not trek for 50km to grind our maize, or stay in the long queue for two hours to grind. Now we cook and feed our families early. In the past we lacked the knowledge on how to talk to our duty bearers but now we are empowered and the machine has helped us to open a savings scheme that will be of self-help to us.”

Pakistan

ActionAid Pakistan prioritised work with women displaced by the 2010 floods and still living in temporary camps. In Charsadda district, ActionAid and partner organisation Blue Veins

ran a women's mobilisation project in which eight Multipurpose Coordination Committees (MPCs) were formed, each comprising up to 10 community women. Committee members were encouraged to select their own president and general secretary from women in the community. Representatives of these committees attended UN coordination cluster meetings at the provincial level to raise their concerns – from harassment in camps, to lack of educational and social rights, to lack of compensation for land lost in the flood. A Women's Caravan was conceived as part of series of activities to coincide with the second anniversary of the flood, highlighting these issues and communicating them to a wider audience. Theatre was chosen as a means to show the human side of the story. For this purpose a group of 20 women came to Islamabad for a three-day theatre training workshop, followed by the caravan performance held over two days. ActionAid Pakistan's flood response therefore incorporated the process of empowerment from conceptualisation to implementation – through the Caravan, the MPCs, peoples' forums, interface workshops with farmer networks and relevant authorities responsible for compensation. The process enabled 30 women represent thousands of women affected by floods, hold authorities farmers' organisations accountable in order to claim their rights to land.

Rwanda

ActionAid Rwanda continued mobilising women farmers to form cooperatives, and the number of coops reached 96. This year, cooperatives in the Ruheru sector benefitted from the installation of storage silos, with separate units for grains and seeds, and an overall storage capacity of 50 tons. These will act as a buffer against price volatility, allowing farmers greater flexibility to buy, sell and consume according to the most favourable market conditions.

Jyamumbere Cooperative recently stored wheat seed in these silos, which members produced jointly by renting 1.2 hectares of land for wheat cultivation. Marta Ntakirutu Mana, Vice President the coop, has markedly improved the economic situation of her family through the group. "With greater access to fertiliser and seed, I have been able to increase my agricultural yields and income, which I have used to pay the school fees of my children and purchase clothing," she says. She also took out a loan of Rwf200,000 from the cooperative, with which she was covered half her initial investment in a wheat-grinding machine. "It has been a successful endeavour, as I have enjoyed a steady market for grinding with daily revenue ranging from Rwf3,000 to 15,000. I have become an exemplary farmer, and was elected as a representative of the National Women's Council, in charge of social affairs at the sector level. My husband, a teacher, respects me and now supports me in attending meetings, whereas he had previously discouraged this due to cultural norm."

Senegal

In Senegal, land is leased to foreign investors and national elites through large-scale deals – a worrying situation compounded by the government's promotion of agribusiness as a miracle solution to tackle rural poverty. In 2012, ActionAid Senegal supported the National Platform of Farmers to mobilise a 'counter forum' prior to the 2012 Agribusiness forum of investors from across the globe, raising awareness of land grabs, warning decision makers and government against prioritising agribusiness in a way that undermines smallholder farmers, and giving a voice to poor farmers – especially women – whose rights to land are being violated and whose needs are being ignored by the government agricultural programmes. Thanks to this mobilisation, the National Platform of Farmers became involved



Women from an ActionAid-supported cooperative perform a dance. With women's rights training the women empowered each other to improve their lives, and now run a basket-weaving business, a flour mill and an early child development centre in their community, all supported by ActionAid.
Credit: ActionAid



Youth activists mobilise during the Agribusiness forum.
Credit: ActionAid

in all national consultations on agricultural projects, enabling farmers to have a say in decisions that affect their lives. A final document including civil society recommendations for agriculture development was issued and shared at the Agribusiness forum.

Sierra Leone

ActionAid and partners worked with children and community stakeholders on child rights issues, especially for girls, in Mbundorbu, Bo district. The series of awareness raising and training programmes by ActionAid and partners on the Child Rights Act, coupled with the construction of schools and provision of teaching and learning materials, helped changed the perception of community members about the need to educate the girl child, and also raised awareness among children about their rights and responsibilities at home and in school. Twelve-year-old Mariama Sajoh said: “Because of the sensitisation and training

sessions organised by ActionAid and its partners on the child right act, I have come to realise the importance of education and would like to see my dream of becoming a nurse in service of my community a reality. Although I am aware of my responsibility to serve my parents, this must not affect my school as it used to be.” When asked about what she will do if she is forced to stay at home or asked to go to the farm when school is in session, and if her parents failed to support her through school, she said: “I will report them to the Village Authorities because it is a violation of my right.” Her conviction has helped friends resist rights violations from community members to stay at home and work instead of going to school. This has been enhanced through her active participation in the children’s government of her school.

Somaliland

Anab is a domestic violence survivor, with wounds on her face from the repeated beating

by her husband. When she could not tolerate the harassment, she did not know who to turn to. Luckily, she met Violence Against Women (VAW) watch group in her district, Burao town, run by ActionAid and WAAPO. The 18-member group has become a powerful presence on the town's streets and in its communities, especially in informal settlements such as internally displaced people camps where there were weak or insufficient security or social services. The VAW watch group documents cases of abuse, and offers assistance (referrals, accompaniment to social services, etc) to women experiencing violence, seeking assistance from local leaders when necessary, talking to women experiencing violence and male perpetrators to offer suggestions for change. As a survivor of domestic violence, Anab received a grant of US\$200 from the group, and invested it in her charcoal business. Eight months later, she surprised her family when she had earned enough to buy farmland with US\$5,000. "In the past, it was very hard to pay school fees and our children were always being sent home for lack of school fees. Now, I thank God because we can comfortably pay school fees."

South Africa

The ActionAid-supported Fihliwa Drop In Centre in Tshihosana Village, Limpopo province, serves a community in which a quarter of residents are HIV positive. Unreliable climate conditions mean food is scarce – a serious problem for people living with HIV/AIDS, as good nutrition is a vital part of their daily struggle to survive. The centre offers a safe place for orphans and vulnerable children and other community members, supporting those who have been directly affected by HIV, and raises awareness of HIV, reducing stigma and the rate of HIV transmission. This year ActionAid trained Home-Based Care (HBC) workers and lay counsellors to offer quality support to people

living with HIV/AIDS and the local community, and trained children and other community members to cultivate 'food gardens', ensuring improved nutrition and providing the centre with a sustainable source of income, and to run a livestock project which played a pivotal role in ensuring access to protein as well as raising income for the centre. The construction of the centre provided building work for local firms and as part of the investment in the building a number of other activities were undertaken. These included the distribution of school uniforms and blankets to local children and the provision of food parcels to families impacted by HIV and AIDS in order to tide them over until the centre was in operation.

Sweden

This year, lobbying by organisations including ActionAid Sweden prompted the Swedish government to acknowledge tax avoidance as a 'conflict of interest' in relation to Sweden's development policy, which states that all Swedish policies must contribute to an equitable and sustainable global development. In its letter to Parliament on Sweden's Policy Coherence for Global Development – a tool to ensure that all government policies are implemented in a way that takes into account (where relevant) implications for developing countries – the government acknowledged the extent of the tax dodging problem, which was a first step toward prioritising it as a key development issue. This not only means the government acknowledges the magnitude of the problem, it also gives ActionAid the chance to refer to the government's own statements to move the tax justice agenda forward.

Tanzania

Young people and other citizens in Kibaha district, Tanzania, successfully tackled allegations of misuse of funds at a local school after training in Public Expenditure Tracking

through ActionAid partner organisation Youth Partnership Countrywide (YPC). YPC worked with local 'youth vote groups', facilitating meetings with the school board, local government leaders, the local MP and the Ministry of Education. An investigation into the use of school funds resulted in the headmaster and an accountant being transferred. The school board was also dissolved for failure to oversee the use of school funds, and a new board was formed. It was further suggested that a 'moral' committee for the school be formed, with government representatives, religious leaders, elders and parents.

Thailand

In Chiangrai, Thailand, hill tribe communities used to burn agricultural waste – leaf matter, grasses, etc. – after harvest, causing pollution and preventing farmers earning until next season. Burning crop waste was believed to fertilise the soil, reduce pests and minimise labour and machinery costs, but recently ActionAid Thailand – working closely with the Hill Area and Community Development Foundation (HADDF) – highlighted the real impact, including respiratory illness, and encouraged a change from 'burn to destroy' to 'burn to create'. The project aimed to reduce air pollution and provide a cost-effective, income-generating fuel source by producing a high-energy briquette from agricultural waste. Local villager Amy Chaojiad, 62, worked in the environmental learning centre in Pang-Sa village as a trainer and played an important role in developing a trial 'briquette'. Though the trial briquette has been certified for its quality by the Science and Technology Service Center of Chiangmai University, they are still developing them through trials with local grill restaurants – a big local market. "The success of this project in Chiangrai will not only have the impact on climate change and support community for income generating, but demonstrates the great

effort of the local organisation, governmental body and communities to work effectively together toward a common goal," said HADDF's Juthamas Rajchprasit.

The Gambia

A cereal bank in Mamud-Fana village this year gathered 391bags (32.3 tons) of groundnuts – a rise of 24 tons on the amount banked when the scheme first started in 2007. Facilitated by grants totalling over D180,000 from ActionAid The Gambia, this steady rise has benefited over 400 local people. ActionAid trained the cereal bank's well-run committee on stores management, leadership, human rights, and women's rights. The success of the scheme is manifested in the reliable availability of good quality seeds – women who never had adequate quantities of groundnut seed can now access good quality seed at the right time, and the area under cultivation has increased, especially for women farmers. This, according to Village Development Committee Chair Ebou Ceesay, is good for food security. "Increased access to good quality seed has enhanced early planting and the accomplishment of other farming operations. Hitherto, smallholder farmers including women had difficulties in getting the right type of seed and have thus had to plant late – that affected the yields. This time around, everyone plants early and works in earnest to overcome the vagaries of weather." Before the scheme, smallholder farmers used to borrow money from non-poor members in the villages to provide food. Madi Gaye, one of the bank's buyers, said "such loans were repaid in kind with high interest rates of 75–100%." The scheme, according to respondents, has gone a long way to address local gender issues. According to Madi, "women are considered strongly for seed and food distribution. We treat their requests with great urgency because they have no other source of support."



Children at Calvary Primary School, Sierra Leone.
Credit: ActionAid

Uganda

Gender discrimination in Uganda has traditionally denied women equal access to education as men. This impacted on the legislative roles of women in Apac district council, where women councillors have hardly spoken since they were elected in May 2011. But in September 2012, ActionAid ran two-day training sessions for female councillors in lobbying and advocacy, gender responsive budgeting and public speaking. The participants left the training feeling more confident to raise issues during council meetings. As a result, female councillors formed an association that featured on local Radio Apac FM, rallying women to demand gender responsive budgets at sub-county and district levels. Female

councillors who were trained buried party differences to focus on women's issues. The Hon. Florence Acuma, a councillor representing female youth to Apac district council and who took part in the training said, "Ever since we were trained on lobbying, advocacy, gender budgeting and public speaking skills, those councillors who had not debated in council are now free – credit goes to NGO Link Forum Apac for the training."

United Kingdom

On International Women's Day 2012 ActionAid UK launched a new parliamentary network on women's rights in Afghanistan. This proved popular with many MPs who, as a result, urged the government to act on this issue. We carried out research on the amount of



Liberal Democrat MP Lynne Featherstone, the UK Champion on International Violence against Women, and P. V. Krishnan, ActionAid International Afghanistan Country Director, at the launch of a new Parliamentary Network on Women's Rights in Afghanistan.
Credit: Lucy Hurn/ActionAid

money needed to tackle violence against women and girls (VAWG) in Afghanistan and published the findings at the beginning of July. The report's launch at the House of Commons was attended by many parliamentarians and DfID officials. As a result of our advocacy work there was a clear shift in the UK government position prior to the Tokyo conference on the future development of Afghanistan. The Mutual Accountability Framework that was announced in Tokyo includes an indicator on implementing the laws and policies on VAWG, for which we had lobbied. In October, the International Development Select Committee report on Afghanistan reproduced a number of ActionAid's recommendations, including our call for progress on women's rights to be used as the litmus test for UK government

intervention. Following the report's publication, ActionAid was congratulated by the Committee on how far we had influenced their findings. We had also lobbied for the inquiry to take place, and provided two rounds of written evidence to it.

United States of America

The 2011, the combination of a drought-devastated corn crop and inflexible mandates (as laid out in the US's Renewable Fuel Standard – RFS) for 13.2 billion gallons of ethanol to be blended into US gasoline pushed corn prices to record highs. But despite pressure from a wide range of actors, including ActionAid USA, the Environmental Protection Agency refused to waive the mandate. This generated a new commitment by a coalition of

“strange bedfellows” – industrial agriculturalists, free marketeers, the grocery and fast food industries, the oil industry, environmental, and development organisations – to work for a complete abolition of US mandates on corn ethanol rather than more flexible ones. ActionAid USA played a critical role in taking advantage of this new political context, highlighting the impact of US biofuels policy on food security and access to land in the global south. As a result of this advocacy and work with the media, ActionAid was the only development organisation invited to a meeting with four US Representatives to inform efforts to draft a RFS reform bill – one that could be supported by all stakeholders. As a result, legislation will be introduced which, if passed, will phase out US corn ethanol mandates and address US policies that generate increased demand for other land-intensive biofuels such as sugar ethanol and soy biodiesel.

Vietnam

ActionAid Vietnam’s ‘Post WTO Poverty Monitoring Project’, conducted with Oxfam and local partners in nine provinces and three cities, continued to monitor changes in livelihoods and the market access of vulnerable groups, with particular emphasis on women, ethnic minorities in mountainous areas, the ‘new poor’, including in-migrants to cities and farmers losing their land due to industrialisation and urbanisation. Findings and recommendations of the project have been used as a basis for the development of stronger policies for ethnic minority poverty reduction and the development of an inclusive social protection system. In his 2012 year-end national teleconference on poverty and social affairs, Vietnam’s Prime Minister formally asked the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, the Committee of Ethnic Minorities (CEM) and related agencies to take into account the multi-dimensions of poverty, to adjust policies for faster and more sustainable poverty reduction in ethnic

minority areas, to design new policies on credit, health insurance, to support vulnerable groups – all policy messages generated and widely shared by the Oxfam/ActionAid Vietnam poverty monitoring project.

Zambia

In Jecapu village, Mpulungu district, access to safe drinking water is limited, but this year village activists pressured local government to drill a borehole at a new school constructed with the help of ActionAid’s Promoting Rights in Schools initiative. “I am overjoyed that Zambezi drilling company visited our area to drill a borehole at the dormitories that ActionAid is constructing,” says community facilitator Daisy Namucenje. “During the training workshop I attended as a PTA member, we were taught that our children have a right to education and that as parents we have the right to demand and hold duty bearers accountable for their actions so as to see to it that education rights are enjoyed. It was this knowledge that gave me... the courage to visit the Office of the Council secretary and the Office of the District Education Board Secretary to ask them to consider sinking a borehole at the girls’ dormitories at the school. Water plays an important role in any society – as the saying goes “Water is life”, and access to clean and safe drinking water is a right.”

Zimbabwe

In 2012 residents in Masvingo in Zimbabwe rejected the local council budget, saying the 80% hike in rates for services such as water, refuse collection and sewerage was unaffordable. Residents also rejected the budget because it did not address the needs of women and young people. With the help of Action Aid partner, Masvingo Residents and Ratepayers Association, which ran workshops on budget tracking, participatory democracy and the rights of residents on community development, 1,800 people signed a petition rejecting the



Amelia Mwama lives in Kankoyo, Zambia, where ActionAid has galvanized local support for its tax justice campaign in the country.

Credit: Jason Larkin/Panos Pictures/ActionAid

budget. Although this was well above the minimum 30 signatures needed for such a petition, the fact that all signatures were on a single sheet disqualified it, and the budget was passed. Gilbert Sibanda, a MURRA member says: “Although the proposed budget was later approved, as residents of Masvingo, we feel that we have influenced changes. We feel that we have impacted on the budget process as the

Municipal Budget for 2013 was not increased on the basis that residents had objected to the 2012 budget.” In another breakthrough, Masvingo residents of Mucheke suburb celebrated the fruits of their work when the Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority (ZESA) installed a new breaker and transformer in their area, replacing a faulty one which had been giving them trouble for over four years. ■

