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**Changing the world
with women and girls**

Smallholder farmers holding small calabash fruits filled with sorghum seeds in the Dodoma Region of Tanzania.

2026

ActionAid's agroecology work

How our agroecology approach enhances gender equality

About ActionAid's approach to agroecology

ActionAid is a global federation with a presence in more than 75 countries. We believe in the individual and collective power of women and girls to reduce poverty and inequalities, and fight for a more just world.

We work with
45 million people
in over 75 countries around the world.

Agroecology is a priority in ActionAid's global strategy. We promote community-led approaches that strengthen resilience, with the belief that

those experiencing climate-induced challenges first-hand should lead the solutions.

We see agroecology as a holistic approach to climate justice and social change, combining ecological principles with economic security and political reform. At ActionAid, we don't promote agroecology skills in isolation.

We have partnered with nearly
3,600 organisations, especially those led by women.

We also:

- **Strengthen the leadership of women smallholder farmers**
- **Promote women's rights, agency and economic empowerment across food systems**
- **Advocate for environmental policy reform to ensure agroecology techniques are sustainable and have the greatest transformative potential.**

In this overview, you can find information about our current agroecology work in sub-Saharan Africa, south Asia and Latin America. This includes our flagship multi-country projects, ongoing initiatives that can be scaled up to increase impact and an overall insight into how ActionAid sees agroecology as a method of enhancing gender equality.



Throughout this portfolio, you can find information on ActionAid's unique and innovative approach to agroecology projects, indicated by this lightbulb.

ActionAid's holistic approach to our agroecology projects aligns with a wide range of the **Sustainable Development Goals**, in particular:



ActionAid's agroecology principles



Social Justice

Supporting women smallholder farmers to strengthen their land rights, food sovereignty and economic opportunities.

Agroecological Practices

Promoting resilient seed systems, healthy soils, biodiversity and climate-resilient farming practices.



Women's Economic Empowerment

Building sustainable livelihoods through cooperatives, savings groups and improved market access.

Systems Change

Influencing policies, public financing and institutions to support long-term, just agroecological transitions.



Portfolio highlights

Tanzania

At least 76,306 people have been reached through campaigns raising community awareness about sustainable and green development models for their livelihoods.

Malawi

Over 6,448 women and young farmers learnt to adopt agroecology practices in 2024 alone.

Ethiopia

6,755 people began disaster preparedness activities and strengthened the resilience of their livelihoods to climate change.

ActionAid's strategic priorities

- Build power from below and work with communities long-term
- Link social justice efforts and forge networks to build collective power
- Influence states, governments and institutions to shift power
- Learn from and share community-centred knowledge to generate alternatives

Malawi

Supporting women farmers involved in the tea industry

In Malawi, our teams support women who are experiencing gender-based violence on tea estates. This approach ensures that women are not only equipped with the ecological tools to build livelihoods, but also feel confident claiming their rights and challenging violence in the workplace.

ActionAid has been working in Malawi since 1990, building established relationships with communities, partners and governments. One of our three priority areas in Malawi is to build the resilience of people living in poverty while strengthening women-led secure livelihoods, preparedness and emergency response. This includes women and young people making greater use of agroecology, in response to the rising price of agricultural inputs and the increasingly severe impacts of climate change.

Key strategic aims by 2028

- ActionAid Malawi will have influenced **eight climate adaptation policies** to address the impacts of the climate crisis as regional and national levels.
- 39,667 people living in poverty will have **increased access to resilient and sustainable food systems**.
- 85,001 households will have adopted green and self-innovation, **climate-friendly alternative livelihood approaches**.

Key achievements and impact

- Through our work on tea estates we have **supported over 56,000 women with training in resilience techniques** that increase their food security.
- To support women farmers to achieve stable incomes, **over 44,000 people have been supported through village loans** and saving programmes, enabling women to grow the capital to scale their businesses.
- By establishing **labour collectives** and secure reporting mechanisms, women farmers can feel more confident and comfortable in the workplace.



Women in Chitipa province in Malawi have benefited from increased land ownership, enabling them to have greater agency over their smallholdings.

East Africa Food crisis response

Humanitarian needs continue to rise in east Africa as the region grapples with the devastating effects of climate change, with an estimated 64 million people facing food insecurity.

ActionAid and our partners have supported over 255,626 people in the region and continue assisting communities to strengthen their food security and resilience to climate change.

Agroecology is a core part of ActionAid's crisis response, for example:

- Training communities in agroecological farming techniques to mitigate the impact of future emergencies
- Increasing smallholders' market access to generate income
- Livelihood support through seed grants and business skills training for communities
- Providing women-headed households with seeds and livestock support as well as livestock production management training
- Training on income diversification to increase farmers' resilience to climate events.



Through training on climate-resilient farming techniques, Sahara has helped her community of farmers feel more confident that their livelihoods can withstand challenges caused by the climate crisis.

Ethiopia Strengthening community resilience

In Ethiopia, ActionAid is supporting over 1,520 women and girls in the Tigray and Amhara regions to build their resilience to the impact of crises such as conflict, drought, and severe food shortages.

Key objectives

- Supporting 400 women smallholder farmers to **adopt climate-resilient farming practices** and agroecology techniques, including organic fertiliser, bio-gases and organic pest management.
- Organising farmers' days, bringing 400 women farmers together from across two regions in order to **share learning, experiences and best practices**.
- Strengthen Savings and Credit Cooperatives (SACCOs) and providing seed funding, **enabling 300 women to access loans** to restore their income-generating activities.
- Support **60 women leaders to develop their leadership and advocacy skills**, to increase their engagement with local authorities and stakeholders.

Women have greater knowledge of financial management, business planning, and saving practices through training in basic business skills and access to SACCOs and revolving funds. With these strengthened financial skills, alongside training on agroecology, women farmers can adapt to climate variability and improve household food security.



Tanzania

Reclaiming traditional seeds and boosting harvests

In Tanzania, ActionAid supports farmers in Chamwino District to return to traditional seed practices, a shift that is strengthening their resilience to climate change.

Through adopting practices such as composting, crop rotation and intercropping, farmers are experiencing record yields, improving nutrition through diverse crops and enhancing both food and livelihood security. Farmers are also now preserving and multiplying their traditional or indigenous seeds such as: sorghum, millet and legumes.

Our teams in Tanzania are also committed to knowledge sharing and have coordinated learning opportunities with farmers in Rwanda. Learning exchange visits have promoted farmer-to-farmer learning, where farmers shared techniques aimed at improving soil fertility, such as demonstrating how crop residues can be converted into organic manure.

They also demonstrated how to prepare organic pesticides, using materials such as chilli, garlic, neem and aloe vera as better alternatives to harmful chemical pesticides.

In parallel, we are also delivering a multi-year project aimed at scaling up public investment in agriculture across both Tanzania and Nigeria.

In Tanzania, we advocated for the necessity of soil mapping, which can highlight areas that may result in low yields. This convinced the Tanzanian government to include soil mapping to smallholder farmers in its annual budget. This enabled soil clinics to be extended to every district, helping to improve soil health and increase productivity.



Key achievements so far

- By facilitating dialogues between farmers, local leaders and policy makers to increase investment in agriculture, districts have **increased agriculture budgets by 1.2 million** Tanzanian Shillings between 2023-2025. An additional TZS 40 million has been allocated to climate change initiatives.
- This season, farmers expect to harvest approximately **200 kilograms of maize seed** and **500 kilograms of sorghum seed** from new seed farms.
- ActionAid Tanzania has been **recognised for its work to advance agroecology** at the Fourth National Ecological Organic Agriculture Conference. This highlights our work with civil society organisations and farming communities throughout Tanzania.



Janeth and her husband have always worked tirelessly on their farm in Chamwino, but often faced difficult seasons. Through agroecology training on community seed systems, Janeth has strengthened her harvesting processes and supported other women to do the same.

Cambodia \ Nepal

Advocating for public financing of agroecology

ActionAid conducted research into government expenditure for sustainable agriculture in Nepal and Cambodia. Consultations were also held with smallholder farmers to understand their challenges and support needs around farming and agroecology, and their core demands for their governments. Reports and policy briefs of the research findings were produced and widely disseminated.

Often, government support for agriculture is focused on farming inputs designed to maximise production and profits, such as hybrid seeds, chemical fertilisers and pesticides. Chemical-intensive agriculture is expensive to maintain, making it difficult for smallholder farmers to earn a sustainable living. Government support is also often designed with little farmer consultation, leaving farming largely determined by government policy, rather than by farmers' needs or preferences.

Key achievements so far

- **1266 smallholder farmers took part in consultation workshops** and gained a deeper understanding of the principles and importance of agroecology.
- A policy roundtable in Nepal discussed the research findings, where **smallholder farmers' voices were heard at the national level.**
- The research was summarised in a policy brief that was widely shared with stakeholders at local and national levels as well as with international bodies including the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP), **elevating the voices of smallholder farmers within global forums.**



Farmers in the Madhesh province of Nepal have also become involved in policy discussions to influence local government.



The project's approach to both interrogate government budgets, as well as consult directly with smallholder farmers, enabled a more comprehensive understanding of policy gaps in relation to agroecology.



Brazil

Supporting coffee producers and coconut breakers through agroecology

ActionAid works across 13 states in Brazil to promote women's rights, climate justice, resilience and agroecology. One of our key projects is our Women and Agroecology Programme, which works with 94 rural coffee producing communities across 14 municipalities in Minas Gerais State.

This project also partners with the Centre of Alternative Technologies (CTA). CTA works with small-scale farmers, technicians and researchers who are seeking alternatives to industrialised agriculture environmental degradation. This project has supported 586 families and young women farmers by promoting the use of organic rather than chemical pesticides and encouraging the use of climate-resilient methods of producing coffee. As one of Brazil's largest exports, coffee production can often lead to deforestation. This initiative ensures this value chain is sustainable and does not harm the land on which people rely.

This project also helps to build a safe and just working environment where women's new agroecology skills can thrive. We support farmers to organise into rural workers' unions to advocate for equal pay. We also lobby coffee buyers to only purchase from producers that actively reduce sexism and hostility in the workplace.



Since 2005, ActionAid has been supporting the Interstate Movement of Babassu Coconut Breakers. More than 350,000 women in Brazil make a living collecting the babassu fruit, a crop used in food, oils, crafts and beauty products. However, their livelihoods are under threat from multiple sources: the climate crisis, extractive industries and deforestation. We also support these groups to defend their livelihoods and land rights, equipping them with solutions for climate adaptation and territorial protection.



Bárbara is a coconut breaker and Secretary of the Association of Women Coconut Breakers. Bárbara uses the coconuts to extract oil, with which she can make soap and body products.

We are also advocating with the government to institutionalise the National Policy on Agroecology and Organic Production.

Bangladesh

Climate-resilient farming and market access for women

In Bangladesh, we are working with 1,000 women (aged 18-35) smallholder farmers in Barisal and Khulna districts in southern Bangladesh with education and training on climate resilient sustainable agriculture practices and renewable technology. It will also facilitate access to viable markets and foster a more inclusive and supportive environment for women farmers.



Sajeda was forcibly displaced from her home in Myanmar and struggled to find a sustainable income in Bangladesh. Through her involvement in a green skill development project, her gardening efforts began to flourish, increasing her family's food security and generating a steady income.

Key achievements so far

- **40 women farmers groups have been formed** (each with 25 members), and now serve as strong community-led platforms. Members have developed the leadership skills and confidence to participate in community-level agricultural planning.
- 480 women have completed climate-resilient sustainable agriculture training in methods such as organic fertiliser production, water-efficiency techniques and green pesticide preparation. **600 women have also learnt techniques in compost application and eco-friendly pest management.**
- **10 solar irrigation pumps have been distributed** to reduce reliance on diesel and reduce irrigation costs. Two solar incubators were provided to support poultry enterprises.

590 women farmers are part of Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) which are providing members with credit for small enterprises, reducing reliance on informal lenders and building long-term financial resilience. This approach ensures environmental sustainability while also promoting women's economic justice.



This project also employs a 'train-the-trainer' model, where one woman leader in each location is equipped to train other women in their community. This will extend the project reach and enable women farmers to continue sharing knowledge for years to come. This also helps to position women leaders as key leaders and representatives in the community.



Supporting seed banks and farming collectives

ActionAid Haiti is supporting 23 groups of farmers in Lascahības, a town near the border with the Dominican Republic. Our teams are implementing an agroecology and climate resilience project in this area that is challenged by the presence of armed groups and high migration from neighbouring countries.

This project promotes community-led agricultural actions that are environmentally friendly, mitigate gender-based violence against women and girls, and reinforce women's economic power.

The 23 groups of farmers involved in this project are supported to pursue community-led agricultural actions in cereal and fruit supply chains that are environmentally friendly.

Through agroecological techniques such as reforestation of land with fruit trees, the project also builds agroprocessing capacity, so women farmers can build a more consistent income. Through the establishment of a community seed bank and farming collectives, not only has resilience to extreme weather been improved, but the economic position of women has been strengthened.



This project has implemented an integrated food security approach, combining crop production, seed distribution and processing units to strengthen the entire agricultural value chain.

In Lascahības, young people learn how to graft crops and cultivate secure livelihoods through agroecology. This has provided a respite from ongoing conflict and ensures their income is more resilient to climate change.



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Key achievements so far

- **6,200 lemon seedlings distributed to 58 farmers**, planting 21.5 hectares of citrus micro-orchards, contributing to reforestation and restoration of degraded soils.
- **809 women and young people trained in small business management**, strengthening their entrepreneurship skills and improving their farming income opportunities
- Two rice and maize processing mills have been installed and operationalised, **improving access to affordable crop processing services for 1,700 people.**

Rwanda

An opportunity to strengthen supply chains through agroecology

In Rwanda, our teams are working with 340 women's farming cooperatives to introduce agroecological methods and ensure their supply chain is effective, reducing waste and strengthening their livelihoods. By forging connections between cooperatives and schools, we will also improve school children's nutrition and generate sustainable income for women farmers.

Currently, 40% of fresh harvests in Rwanda go to waste due to limited access to post-harvest facilities (like cold and airtight storage) and markets. Additionally, women farmers have very limited access to improved agricultural inputs compared to their male counterparts.

Overall, the project is making significant inroads in addressing food insecurity. Food insecurity in the region has decreased from 55% to 45% and participating households are reporting lower rates of malnutrition.



Ruth is a smallholder farmer from Rwanda who has learnt the method of vermicomposting to increase her harvest yields and ultimately increase her income.

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This project has focused on strengthening women farmers' supply chains. Without this action, higher yields would just lead to waste. Solar-powered cold rooms and zero-energy cooling chambers have been essential in increasing produce's shelf life.

Hermetic, airtight storage has also reduced waste of grains and pulses. In addition, farmers have learnt how to create compost pits and understand vermicomposting (using worms to break down manure into nutrient-rich soil).

Key achievements so far

- 7,350 women farmers involved in this project have reported a **50% increase in their agricultural yields.**
- **3,300 women have been trained to use irrigation pumps** and also participated in workshops on best nutritional practices.
- 2,901 women have accessed agri-inputs such as **climate-resilient cereal and grain seeds.**
- **15 women-led farming cooperatives have begun selling their produce to schools**, securing a reliable income and improve children's nutrition.

The Gambia

Promoting soil fertility and organic fertiliser production

In the Gambia, we are working with 25,000 women living in rural areas and 33,000 farmers to distribute over 54,000 tonnes of organic fertiliser and ultimately reach 284,800 people.

Three quarters of the population in The Gambia earn their living through farming, with women accounting for 88% of farmers involved in the horticulture sector. Despite producing most of the food, women often lack control over their livelihoods. Low soil fertility in the Gambia also means farmers must use fertilisers, which are often full of harmful chemicals.

This project supports women and young farmers with training on agroecology and the use of organic fertilisers, as well as the supply of fencing, tools, and solar powered irrigation systems. We are also raising awareness amongst government officials and the public of the benefits of agroecology and organic fertilisers to influence policy.

In order to ensure innovative agroecology initiatives are accessible to all community members, this project works with people with disabilities to make agroecology more inclusive. Community gardens and compost production chambers have been made accessible through consultations.

To raise awareness of the benefits of organic fertiliser, this project has used radio channels, social media platforms and podcasts to campaign for change.



Key achievements so far

- **363 women farmers have gained access to three community vegetable gardens**, a further 2,976 community members, including 49 people with disabilities are also benefiting from these spaces.
- **Three compost production chambers**, each with the capacity to produce up to 20,000 tonnes of organic fertiliser per month. Community members have been trained on how to operate these chambers.

Jaila is a farmer who has learnt how to make her own organic compost. She is shown here applying it to her okra beds.



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**Thank you so much for your interest
in our agroecology work.**

Please reach out at philanthropy@actionaid.org for additional information.