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NEWSLETTER

BUILDING PEOPLE POWER FOR ECO-SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE



Our beloved reader,

Across South Africa, women, young people and communities are proving that lasting change begins when people have the power to organise, participate and lead. During this quarter, ActionAid South Africa strengthened young women's leadership, advanced climate justice, expanded democratic participation and supported communities confronting inequality. Every achievement in these pages reflects the collective commitment of our supporters,

commitment of our supporters, partners and community activists who continue to build a fairer, safer and more just society.

Your continued support has catapulted every story of empowerment, every community mobilized and has ensured that our work in gender justice, economic justice, accountable governance and youth leadership remains steady, strategic and community led.

We cannot wait for our third installment and have already started working on activities connecting youth to democratic process and uplifting communities in mining affected communities to confront systematic inequality at its roots. But before we move on towards new inspirations, we encourage you to read our submission revealing our key moments from the 2nd quarter of the year.

Enjoy the read!



From Mamelodi to Parliament



Meet Lerato, A water science practitioner and Young Urban Women Movement activist from the township of Mamelodi, South Africa. Lerato was recently selected to lead the Gauteng team for the Youth Parliament for Water. In a space where policy conversations are typically dominated by engineers and politicians talking about budgets and infrastructure, Lerato introduces a completely different dataset: the lens of unpaid care work.

“Women and girls are affected differently during periodical water cuts. They are the ones who carry the heavy burden of responsibility, she reflects.”

“Through my involvement in the YUWM as well as other environmental spaces, I have learned that these experiences are often missing from formal policy. In the Youth Parliament for Water, I want to make sure that conversations about water governance are not only technical, but also human-centered. I want the lived experiences of various community actors, including young women and girls, to shape the agenda.”

Supporting initiatives like the Young Urban Women Movement proves that when young women are given resources and spaces to organize, meaningful leadership emerges from the ground up. Lerato's journey demonstrates that young women do not need pity, they need structural access.

For organizations like ActionAid South Africa, continuing to invest in young urban women is a direct investment in sustainable, long-term climate strategy.

These women are already holding communities together during environmental crises and their leadership is what connects local ground realities to global climate policy.

For Lerato, the most profound reflection is the lesson she carries for the next generation of girls, girls who feel that big, intimidating conference rooms were not built for them.

“You do not need to wait until you feel 'perfect' or fully ready to participate. Start where you are. Leadership grows through participation and I am evidence of that.”

Her message to the world, and to institutions like ActionAid, remains clear and uncompromised:

“Investing in young women is not charity. It is a sustainable strategy, Lerato says simply. “That investment will continue to create ripple effects far beyond one individual.”



A celebration of Young Urban Women

The 22nd of June 2026, saw the inception of the Young Urban Women & Valuing Women's Work convening held in Johannesburg to commemorate 3 years of successful program implementation. To mark this milestone, the convening brought together partners from the four implementing countries, namely, Kenya, Ghana, Malawi, and South Africa. As the Young Urban Women program moves into its newest implementation phase, the convening gave space to take stock of the achievements and lessons learned from the previous phase, celebrating the young women who embodied the initiative and the milestones reached along the way. The conversations shared reaffirmed how our greatest strength lies in the collective power, leadership and vision of young women themselves.



Young people shift from spectators to active citizens



National Youth Month saw the launch of the Youth and Democracy Dialogue series in Johannesburg, under the Global Platforms program, as part of ActionAid South Africa's broader effort to strengthen youth civic participation and democratic engagement ahead of the 2026 Local Government Elections.

The dialogues, which are also set to mobilise youth in the Eastern Cape, KZN and Mpumalanga region, seek to create an open and inclusive platform where young people from diverse backgrounds can engage honestly on the meaning and value of democracy, active citizenship and the role of young people in shaping the future of the country.

At its core the dialogue demonstrated that young people are not disengaged from democracy. But rather, many are questioning whether existing democratic institutions and processes are sufficiently responsive to their lived realities.

Some of the key outcomes and recommendations reflected in the dialogue included:

- The development of a youth-led democratic agenda
- A space for strengthened civic and political education
- Recognising the impact of unemployment, inequality and exclusion on young people's ability to participate meaningfully.
- Supporting youth organising and collective action into moving towards coordinated responses to common challenges, and
- The need for inclusive participatory efforts towards young people across different social, economic and identity backgrounds.

Whilst participants were encouraged to express disagreement, challenge assumptions and engage critically with the issues affecting their generation, an emerging message from dialogue remains: Democracy is not a destination, it is an ongoing responsibility.

The dialogue emphasized that by building a sustained youth democracy platform that supports youth led advocacy and mobilization, efforts can move into strengthening continuous youth participation beyond the 2026 elections. Through the Youth and Democracy Dialogue young people are shifting away from just being spectators and periodic voters into being active citizens, organisers and participants in shaping the future they will ultimately inherit and pass on to those who come after them.



Young women redefining ethical leadership

ActionAid South Africa joins Good Governance Africa for the Girl Child Workshop series



Young women are increasingly encouraged to lead with integrity, uphold strong ethical principles and demonstrate moral courage whilst navigating workplaces and institutional structures that often penalize them for doing so. This contradiction creates an environment where they may hesitate to report misconduct, challenge discrimination or exercise ethical leadership for fear of exclusion.

Recognising the importance of preparing young women to navigate these challenges, ActionAid South Africa joined Good Governance Africa's Girl Child Workshop Series, focusing particularly on Unpacking Workplace Inequality and Whistleblowing.

Held on 22 April 2026, the workshop was the second installment of a series of workshops, leading up to the Girl Child Dialogue in commemoration of the International Day of the Girl Child in October.

From understanding workplace rights to learning how to speak up safely, the workshop aimed to equip the young women learners with the knowledge to respond safely to unethical practices as they prepare to enter the world of work. The session contributed to equipping a generation of young women leaders who are informed, empowered, better prepared to advocate for safer working environments and ready to lead with integrity.

Mokopane calls for a Just Energy Transition grounded in human rights

Through The People's Claim Campaign, ActionAid South Africa convened a community Imbizo in Mokopane, creating a space for women, young people and community leaders to share their lived experiences of mining and its impacts. There were no "experts" speaking on behalf of the community. Instead, communities spoke for themselves sharing stories of resilience, hope, dignity and a determination for justice.

The dialogue highlighted concerns around the expansion of critical minerals extraction, the Just Energy Transition, environmental degradation, water security, livelihoods, unemployment and the need for meaningful participation in decisions that affect communities. One of the strongest issues raised was the relocation of communities from their ancestral land, often without adequate consultation or respect for the principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). Community members shared how relocation has disrupted livelihoods, weakened social and cultural connections, and left many feeling excluded from decisions that directly affect their lives and futures.



Young people also reflected on the contradiction of living in resource-rich communities while experiencing unemployment, exclusion and limited opportunities. Through the People's Claim, participants called for decent employment opportunities, accessible skills development, pathways into green industries, support for youth-led innovation and enterprise, and a Just Energy Transition grounded in human rights and meaningful youth participation.

There was one message that echoed throughout the gathering: "Communities are not asking to be spoken for they are asking to be heard."

The stories shared in Mokopane are more than personal experiences; they are a form of evidence, a source of knowledge and a foundation for collective advocacy. Through the People's Claim Campaign, community voices are being transformed into collective power strengthening demands for accountability, respect for human rights and a Just Energy Transition that places communities at the center and leaves no one behind.



The People's Claim Campaign is a community-led initiative that brings together mining-affected communities to amplify their voices and advocate for a just, inclusive and rights-based future.

At its heart is the belief that communities are not merely affected by decisions made about their land and resources; they are rights holders, knowledge holders and active agents of change with the power to shape the future they want.



"After today's Youth & Democracy Dialogue, I am committing myself to building an app that will help young voters learn about the different parties that they wish to elect, just to give them different backgrounds about the parties, the manifestos and maybe also some of the corrupt scandals they've been part of. In addition to that, try to push my community's youth to become more active and present in elections."

"I have always identified myself as a feminist, but I did not quite understand it so the Young Urban Women Movement became a safe space for me to meaningfully understand what it is all about and how I can be active as a feminist within my community. My message to young women is that there's space for you in every room. You are never too small. There's always space for you."

-Phemelo (Young Urban Women activist)



"A successful young South Africa in my opinion is someone who is driven to be the best version of themselves without being held back by any barriers and I think the current systems are making it a bit difficult to navigate because they are not addressing the issues on the ground and they are out of reality with the actual challenges that young people are being faced with."

~ Marlin Madondo (Business Development Associate, ActionAid SA)

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OFFICIAL STATEMENT

ActionAid South Africa Calls for Dialogue, Social Cohesion and an End to Anti-Migrant sentiments





Right now, your amazing support for ActionAid South Africa means that you are directly supporting this work on the ground. Every young woman who discovers her voice strengthens democracy. Every community that organises strengthens accountability. And every supporter who stands with ActionAid South Africa helps build a future where justice is not an aspiration but a lived reality. Together, we are shifting power.

Through our amazing **POWER SHIFTERS**, we have already transformed the lives of over 52 000 people, including 28 000 women and girls. But there is always more work to be done, and your support helps ignite power in communities to bring about lasting change. R50/month helps provide essential resources for community-based advocacy and women's rights programming in South Africa. Become a **POWER SHIFTER** today and donate below.

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