



GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE



Our Expertise and Experience

Practical
ACTION

We believe that gender transformative change is fundamental to creating a world that works better for everyone. Everyone benefits when women and men enjoy equal opportunities to work, to participate in decision-making, to lead and to thrive.

However, gender inequality remains widespread and deep rooted. At current rates, it will take over 200 years to close the gender gap in economic opportunity.¹ On average, women spend about 2.5 times as many hours on unpaid domestic and care work as men. One in three women have been subjected to physical or sexual violence. And most recently, the brunt of the Covid-19 pandemic has fallen disproportionately on women, with unemployment rising for women during 2019 by 19 million, and 47 million women plunged into extreme poverty.²

Gender and other social inequalities are fundamental drivers of poverty all over the world. **This has to change.**

We believe that everyone should have the opportunity, resources and support to achieve their potential. Gender equality is development. That's why we champion the advancement of gender equality and women's empowerment across our four aims.



Farming that works

Nearly half the world's farmers are women. Women play a vital role in ensuring food security and nutrition in most communities. Yet women face persistent inequalities in access to and control of productive resources such as land, inputs, services, finance, market information and technologies.

Evidence shows that removing gender-related barriers in agriculture and business could substantively promote growth, accelerate poverty reduction, and catalyse food security.



Energy that transforms

Almost three billion people can't cook cleanly and one billion don't have access to electricity. Indoor air pollution is one of the leading causes of mortality amongst women globally. Women spend many hours collecting fuel and have to carry heavy loads for long distances, often at considerable risk to their safety.

As key energy users, women's experiences are essential for inclusive energy policy. Research shows that women entrepreneurs reach last mile energy markets more effectively than current centralised models.



Resilience that protects

Inequalities across age, disability, socio-economic status and gender exacerbate disaster risks. Women often have less access to assets and limited decision-making power. Barriers to information can mean women struggle to access warning information or lack awareness of how best to respond. In many contexts, women are left behind to help children and the elderly to safety, but are all too often overlooked in rescue volunteer groups and training.

Despite all the barriers they face, time and again women demonstrate they have the ideas, courage and energy to take action and lead during disaster preparedness and response.



Cities fit for people

The needs of women and children in water, sanitation and waste management are often overlooked. Inadequate services create unsanitary conditions, leading to infectious disease, worsening reproductive health, and higher maternal and infant mortality. Women and girls are disproportionately burdened with domestic tasks like water collection, often at the expense of paid work and education, and increasing exposure to risks of injury and, in some contexts, sexual violence.

Inclusive waste management and sanitation ensures all needs are met, opens new economic opportunities for women, and creates safer urban environments and better health outcomes for all.

Cover image

Entrepreneurs in Nepal working to build and sell safe, sustainable Earth Bricks.

OUR COMMITMENT



Marisa is working to make her community in Chaclacayo Peru more resilient to climate change.

Practical Action is committed to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment through all our work.

We ensure that all our work is gender sensitive, seeking gender transformative approaches as our overall ambition and in accordance with context.

Gender sensitive interventions and activities aim to meet the day-to-day practical needs of women and men.

Gender transformative interventions address strategic gender interests. The aim is to achieve greater gender equality by challenging inequalities. Often strategic interests relate to decision-making power or control over resources, such as access to markets, equal wages, political representation, legal entitlement to land, or distribution of household tasks. In this way, gender transformative approaches promote women's empowerment.

At Practical Action we work with women and men. We work with women to understand how the current system can be changed to better meet their needs, reflect their views and support their lives and wellbeing. We

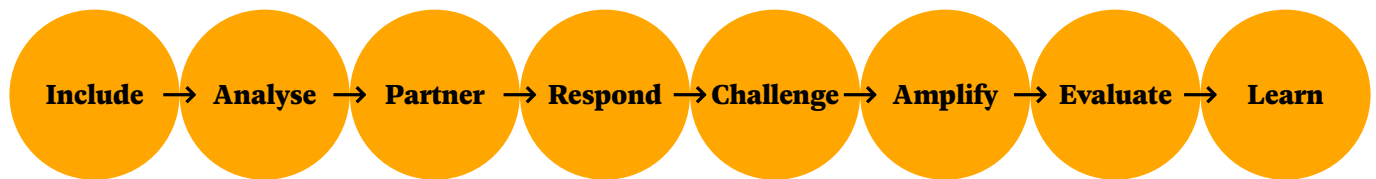
engage and work constructively with men to challenge assumptions, prejudices and behaviours.

We believe that gender equality is development and nothing is gender-neutral. Every time we initiate a new piece of work we will ask ourselves and our partners, 'Are we going to preserve existing gender inequalities with this intervention or are we going to contribute to real change?'

Gender is a shared responsibility at Practical Action, and our approach is underpinned by our Gender Policy, available [here](#). Our board has 44% women representation. 70% of our Global Leadership Team are women, led by a woman CEO. We have Gender Focal Points in all offices and an active Global Gender Group that shares learning and experiences across the organisation.

OUR APPROACH

Practical Action's approach to gender transformative change is rooted in the various specific local realities of where we work. The core ingredients of how we bring about intersectional gender transformative change can be summarised as follows, and we aspire to use this method in all of our work.



- **Include** – At Practical Action women and other excluded groups are meaningfully included from the outset – at project design, during implementation, and at evaluation.
- **Analyse** – Gender analysis and vulnerability and capacity assessment are used to understand practical gender needs and strategic gender interests in each context where we work. Increasingly, Practical Action embraces intersectionality to explore how different aspects of social exclusion reinforce and augment one another, and to ensure we go beyond the simple binary categories of women/men.
- **Partner** – Our partners are committed to gender and inclusion. They include women-led organisations, such as slum committees, farmers co-operatives, businesses and women's movements.
- **Respond** – Once we understand the practical needs of women and of other socially excluded groups, Practical Action works with our partners to address these in programme design and implementation.
- **Challenge** – To support gender transformative change, Practical Action addresses strategic gender interests and challenges the status quo in terms of women's access to resources, services, opportunities and rights. We assess risks and develop mitigation strategies – those with entrenched interests rarely give up privilege without resistance.
- **Amplify** – Women and excluded groups are supported to articulate their own priorities to decision makers. We convene forums but step back and give space for these voices to speak for themselves. Priorities are captured and amplified through Practical Action's publications and influencing.
- **Evaluate** – Gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation methodologies enable us to see how change processes are unfolding for women, for men and for excluded groups.
- **Learn** – We recognised that change processes are rarely simple and linear. Therefore, we focus on identifying gaps in our knowledge, and regularly convene teams to share learning, and then adapt our approach. Achievements and lessons learnt are documented and shared.



Community monitoring on the Bolivian Altiplano.

OUR EXPERIENCE AROUND THE WORLD

Practical Action works with communities, development agencies, governments and private companies to promote gender transformative change across its four change ambitions.

Flagship examples include:



Agriculture that works **Livelihoods and Food Security in Zimbabwe**

In Zimbabwe, Practical Action is working to improve food security, strengthen community relationships and reduce gender inequality. We use the powerful Gender Action Learning Systems (GALS) methodology, a community-driven empowerment model that promotes awareness raising, gender advocacy, life and livelihood planning, and collective action. Using GALS, Practical Action has worked intensely with 87,250 smallholder households, in Matebeleland South and Manicaland Provinces. The programme is working to ensure that

women take a leading role in asset ownership and decision-making, express their views, and demand for services and rights. A series of participatory visual tools support facilitated group meetings around visioning, analysis, change planning and tracking by individuals, households and stakeholder groups. Locally-based “Gender champions” provide ongoing support to participating households. Our staff in Zimbabwe have found GALS to be particularly effective for engaging with men in nonthreatening and constructive ways around behaviour and attitude change.

Cities fit for people **‘Sunolo Sakhi’ – ‘Sister, let’s listen’**

In Odisha India, Practical Action’s ‘Sunolo Sakhi’ programme (‘Sister, let’s listen’) has challenged taboos around menstruation and improved access to health information and advice for adolescent girls. The programme supported youth clubs and a weekly phone-in radio show led by a health worker. It developed and distributed information materials designed specifically for girls with hearing and/or visual impairments. These included an audio-book format, a video-book version which used sign-language, and a braille version. Further information on ‘Sunolo Sakhi’ is available [here](#).





Energy that transforms **Women in Energy Enterprises Kenya**

In Kenya, Practical Action’s clean energy programme has helped more than 1,130,000 individuals experience the benefits of clean energy, reducing the time women spend collecting firewood, preventing avoidable deaths from indoor smoke and reducing pressures on forest resources.

The programme has successfully supported over 400 women entrepreneurs to establish energy enterprises providing efficient cook stoves, fuel briquettes and solar home systems. Through training on business development skills, empowerment and leadership,

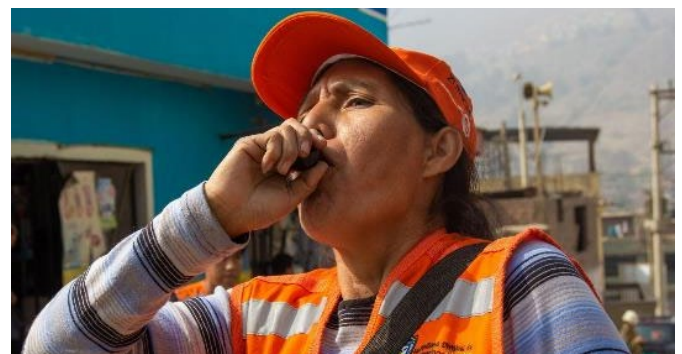
participating women entrepreneurs have become clean energy champions in their communities and have created employment opportunities for over 300 other local people to date.

Practical Action has supported women entrepreneurs to establish and manage village savings and loans associations to support them with business capital. The work has also extended into influencing the enabling environment for gender equality and inclusion. Kenya now has a gender policy for the energy sector at a national level, and the team are supporting county governments to implement this at a sub-national level.

Resilience that protects **Missing Voices Methodology**

For many years Practical Action has worked extensively in flood prone communities to develop and improve ‘Early Warning Systems’ (EWS). More recently, we published the ‘[Missing Voices](#)’ study which explores EWS in Nepal and Peru using an intersectional gender lens. The research explores a diverse range of marginalised experiences and perspectives on EWS, including those of cisgender women, transgender women and men, non-binary or third gender people, disabled women, single mothers, elderly women and adolescent girls.³ ‘Missing Voices’ highlights issues which are invisible in the wider literature on EWS.

The methodology focuses on marginalised groups based on contextual knowledge about the factors which drive marginalisation in a given location. With the support of trusted intermediaries, and via peer referral, telephone contact is made with individuals who are willing and able to speak with us. Interviewees have control over when and where they undertake



interviews, which enables vulnerable groups to speak with greater openness and without scrutiny, in conversations touching upon sensitive topics. In this way, the methodology significantly enhances the quality of interview data and emphasises the agency of interviewees. Practical Action has published the findings from Peru and Nepal and has since applied the methodology in Malawi, Dominica, and the Philippines. We have trained other organisations on the approach, and are producing a manual so others can use the methodology and learn from marginalised voices.

PARTNER WITH US



Mercy and her brother Robert prepare natural fertiliser, a regenerative practice used to sustain farm productivity.

We're a global change-making organisation that was inspired over 50 years ago by radical economist E.F. Schumacher – who challenged the conventional aid thinking of the day.

Schumacher believed in solutions suited to context; equipping people with the skills and knowledge to change their situation; economic systems that work for all; and a duty to live within our planet's means. While development approaches have changed over the years, these founding beliefs still drive us.

We have a long history of challenging norms to change the systems that drive poverty and vulnerability. We have earned a reputation for developing innovative, community-powered solutions that achieve transformative change in peoples' lives and livelihoods.

Our work is grounded in the realities of poverty, including gendered inequalities and injustices. Our starting point is focussed – building a deep understanding of what already works, and what could be improved. We work with local communities, especially

women and marginalised people, empowering them to unlock their potential.

And although we start with local communities, we think 'big' – analysing the factors that can change the underlying systems and identifying where we are best placed to effect change. And who we can convene and collaborate with more widely – governments, international organisations, and increasingly the private sector – to help take proven approaches to the next level of scale and sustainability.

We operate across Africa, Asia, and Latin America. And with broad expertise across clean energy, water, waste and sanitation, climate and resilience, agriculture, market systems, and gender, we integrate this expertise to solve complex and interconnected problems.

End notes

1. Human Development Report 2019. *Beyond income, beyond averages, beyond today: Inequalities in human development in the 21st century*. Pg.147. Available [here](#).
2. The Guardian. 30th June 2021. *Billions pledged to tackle gender inequality at UN forum*. Available [here](#).
3. **Cisgender** – A person whose gender identity is consistent with their sex assigned at birth. **Transgender** – A transgender person has a gender identity that does not match the sex they were assigned at birth.

Non-binary – An umbrella term for gender identities that are not exclusively either boy/man or girl/woman. **Third gender** – A person who has a gender identity that is neither female nor male. Third gender people may also demonstrate fluidity within their gender identity and may occupy social roles typically associated with one or more gender identities. Third gender identities are usually culturally specific and third gender people may or may not identify as transgender.

Definitions taken from the following publication: Practical Action 2019. *Gender Transformative Early Warning Systems*. Available [here](#).






Community volunteer Rehana explains a disaster preparedness app to villagers in Southern Bangladesh.

**Together we can create a world
that works better for everyone**

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