Summer 2020

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WOMANKIND

WORLDWIDE EQUAL RESPECTED PROUD



Welcome



Firstly, Womankind hopes that you and your loved ones are keeping safe and coping as best you can in these difficult and unsettling times.

Wherever you are in the world, the COVID-19 crisis presents ever evolving challenges and uncertainties and the pandemic has forced us all to adapt to significant and often extremely demanding changes. For Womankind's partners in Africa and Asia, this is especially true, where the crisis is further compounded by issues such as food insecurity, limited access to healthcare and police brutality used to enforce the lockdown.

COVID-19 is disproportionately impacting women and girls around the world and the most marginalised are among the hardest hit. Our partners are reporting a higher demand for their services while facing a lack of available flexible funding that would allow them to finance new or increased services. In response, Womankind has set up the COVID-19 Resilience Fund. Find out more about the fund and how you can support our partners in these unprecedented times on **page 3**.

Despite the unsurmountable challenges the world currently faces, the pandemic has proven to be an opportunity to come together, to innovate and to seek change. Womankind stands in solidarity with the anti-racism movements rising up throughout the world to dismantle racism and white supremacy. As a feminist women's rights organisation, we know that without racial justice, there will be no gender justice and when people come together in movements, they are a powerful force for change. On **page 4 & 5**, we reflect on examples of collective action in times of crisis. As many fundraising events have been postponed and cancelled, our supporters have been coming up with inventive ways to raise money with the 2.6 Challenge - more on page 6. These examples give us hope that even in the midst of the adversity, we can pull together, survive and build a world where we thrive.



Caroline Haworth
Chief Executive, Womankind Worldwide

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Womankind Worldwide's vision is of a just world where the rights of all women are respected, valued and realised. We work in partnership with women's movements around the world to bring about lasting change in women's lives.

Aims:

- An end to all forms of violence against women and girls
- Women's economic rights and control over resources
- Women's equal influence in decision making and ability to exercise political power

Womankind Worldwide

Wenlock Studios
50-52 Wharf Road
London N1 7EU
020 3567 5930
info@womankind.org.uk
www.womankind.org.uk
Registered Charity No. 328206
Company Reg. No. 2404121



Photo: Women for Human Rights provided relief packages and cooked meals for 400-500 people everyday throughout the lockdown in Nepal.

Resilience funds: **Strengthening the response to COVID-19**

COVID-19 and the fallout left in its wake has transformed the lives of millions across the world. From increasing violence to loss of income for informal workers, women have been left fighting for their lives and their livelihoods.

As ever, grassroots women's movements have been on the frontlines of the response. At Womankind we understand that our partners are best placed to know how to support women in their communities. To support our partners and the women they work with, we've launched the **COVID-19 Resilience Fund**.

The COVID-19 Resilience Fund will support our partners to continue their vital COVID-19 relief efforts at a time when their **services are in higher demand and funding is harder to secure**. It will also help partners carry out advocacy to influence their governments to have gender responsive COVID-19 response and recovery plans.

Womankind partner Mitini Nepal describe the difference this grant will make to women in their community.

*"As a marginalised and underprivileged community, **LBTQI+ women have been experiencing extreme hardships** at this difficult phase of a global pandemic.*

What does LBTQI+ stand for?
Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/ Questioning and Intersex. The plus sign (+) stands for all the genders and orientations which are not listed here.

*With LBTQI+ women unemployed or in the informal sector they have been unable to afford food, rent and other essentials. In order to claim relief packages distributed by the Nepal government, it was mandatory to show their citizenships. Many LBTQI+ people do not have their legal documents with them as they had fled home and transgender individuals mostly have citizenships that announces the gender assigned at birth. This means that **LBTQI+ women have been unable to access relief packages and have no source of income**.*

The Womankind COVID-19 Resilience Fund will help us to continue to support LBTQI+ women by distributing relief packages to the affected people of the community. This small sum of money will help them to afford food and other essentials until they are able to work."

Support our work
Help us to support our partner organisations during these unprecedented times. Visit womankind.org.uk/donate



Photo: Volunteers for Women for Human Rights building temporary shelters following the devastating earthquake in 2015.

The power of collective action **in time of crisis**

As the world grapples with the growing global coronavirus pandemic, and the gendered impacts of the crisis emerge, it is easy to feel scared, powerless or even hopeless. But one positive side effect from the ever changing world of the last few months has been the resurgence of community groups. A source of solidarity for many people has been groups of their friends or neighbours coming together to run errands or simply to check in on one another.

The idea of people coming together in groups to support one another or create change is not new. For decades women have found strength to push back against women's rights violations through collective actions including in times of national crises – to improve the communities that they live in.

We've collected three examples from around the world which demonstrate the power of women coming together in times of crisis.

1 Pushing Ebola out of West Africa

The Ebola outbreak in 2014 was first reported in Guinea in West Africa. Quickly spreading to neighbouring countries including Liberia, Sierra Leone and Nigeria, it became the deadliest outbreak of Ebola since the discovery of the disease in 1976. As with many crises, women were disproportionately impacted by the disease with higher levels of exposure due to their prominence in the healthcare sector, and an increased risk of maternal mortality. Quickly **women organised to stop the spread by making sure rural communities were educated about Ebola and how to prevent infection**. They also worked to support girls to stay in school and women to gain food security. Womankind worked with former partners in Liberia and Sierra Leone during this crisis. By organising together women dealt with both the health and social impacts of Ebola.



Photo: Women's Legal Aid Centre (WLAC) paralegals and support team who work to reduce violence against women and girls in Tanzania and Kenya.

2 Nepali women mobilising after the 2015 earthquake

In 2015 Nepal suffered one of the most devastating earthquakes of the last decade. Measuring 7.8 magnitude, it impacted over 1.4 million people who saw their homes, communities and livelihoods destroyed. In the aftermath of the disaster, women's rights activists mobilised their networks and began rapid response to their communities. Together they made sure vital supplies such as food and medical equipment reached those in need. Their feminist lens meant that items often neglected, such as menstrual products and supplies for pregnant women - were made available for women and girls. **The networks of women's rights activists also worked to protect women from trafficking**, the risks of which increase for women and girls following a disaster.

3 Supporting refugee women survivors of violence

The violence that women and girls experience is exasperated during and after a conflict. When women flee conflict they are at greater risk of violence in refugee camps from partners, family members or strangers. Tanzania's Nyarugusu refugee camp is home to over 130,000 people and the threat of sexual violence is high. To counter this threat, women in the camps organised and created safe spaces for women and girls. Alongside former Womankind partner Women's Legal Aid Centre (WLAC) **they supported women and girls to rebuild their lives after violence through counselling, legal aid and training**.

These three examples show that even in the midst of crises when women come together to take collective actions they improve the lives of women, girls and the wider community.



Find out more

This piece was taken from a longer blog post on our website written by our Communications Officer Christina. Read the full piece at https://bit.ly/2EaT2pE

The **2.6 challenge**

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The 2.6 Challenge was launched to support charities whose fundraising events (including the London Marathon) had been cancelled or postponed due to COVID-19. The idea was simple: think of an activity based around the number 2.6 or 26 (inspired by April 26th - the date of the London Marathon!), post your challenge online, and ask your friends and family to sponsor you. Womankind staff, trustees and their families took part, raising a fantastic £7,268!





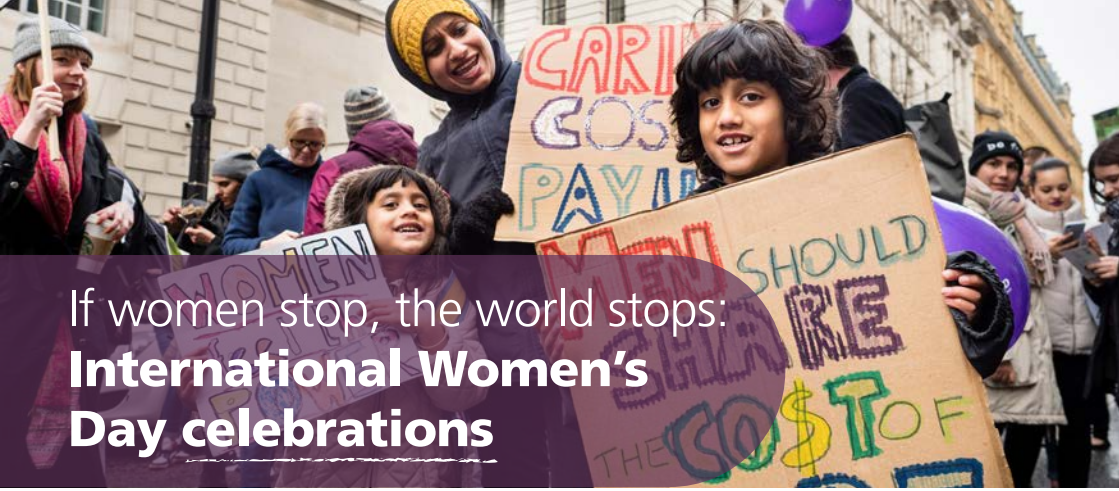


"Our marathon runners missed out this year but it was fun for Womankind staff to get moving instead!" – **Flo**

Clockwise from top left:
Alicia walked 2.6 miles, 26 times with her spaniel Alba, **Flo** completed 26 yoga sun salutations, **Maya** (aged 3) ran 26 laps of the garden.

Take part

Do you want to do something similar for women's rights? We are always happy to hear from you! Email Flo (flo.chester@womankind.org.uk) and she will help you set up your challenge!



If women stop, the world stops: **International Women's Day celebrations**

This International Women's Day, before COVID-19 drastically altered how women can mobilise, we took our activism back to its roots, and took our call for equality to the streets.

Meeting at Whitehall Place in London there was an electrifying energy in the air from the start, as **women and girls of all ages sang songs of protest and chanted**. We marched through the streets of London to a grand finale gathering at Parliament Square with music, poetry and rousing speeches highlighting our collective goal of gender equality. Womankind staff and supporters alike were in such high spirits –even the rain couldn't deter us!

Our march was just one part of a global sisterhood as we joined thousands of women striking across the world as part of a larger Global Women's Strike. Together we made it clear, women's contributions (which are so often ignored, eg. unpaid care work) are vital to the world: **when women stop the world stops**.

This year's International Women's Day was particularly significant as 2020 marks a landmark year for women's rights.

25 years ago world leaders promised to make women's rights a reality for all women and girls, producing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Yet, 25 years later there is no single country on earth where women have equal rights and opportunities. For more marginalised women these rights and opportunities are even fewer.

Photo: Womankind's Programme Manager Piyumi Samaraweera and her children Kamil and Ayaana taking part in the IWD 2020 march in London.

While there has been some progress for some women, in some countries, some is not all. Which is why we marched - to hold world leaders to account for the promises they made 25 years ago. Thousands of women standing together in London and in cities all across the globe sent a clear and unified message that we've had enough! **It's time the voices of all women, especially the most marginalised women and girls, are heard and women's rights became a reality for all, not just some of us.**

Find out more
Read about our AllNotSome campaign at action.womankind.org.uk/allnotsome



Photo: Attendees at one of LOOM's storytelling workshops in Nepal.

Photo source: facebook.com/loomnepal

Herstory – women at the centre of storytelling

Imagine you had been told your life story wasn't important. That it was your father's, brother's or husband's story you should focus on. This is exactly what Womankind partner, LOOM Nepal, have been working to change.

LOOM have a long history of building intergenerational ties between women. Through their workshops, women of all ages come together to build campaigns against child marriage and period shaming (a practice known as Chhaupadi in Nepali) where girls

are banished away from home for the duration of their monthly periods. LOOM also noticed something else during these workshops: the power of storytelling. **Each woman had a story to tell, and often women found solidarity through the similarity of their stories**. However, they often found it difficult to identify themselves at the centre of their story, to express their thoughts and feelings, and to confront the effects of past experiences.



*"I struggle to be recognised as a single woman with two young sons. **This workshop is very important for me as I come from a society where voices of women are ignored**. As a single woman, it is difficult for me to share my thoughts with the others as it is not counted."* Bishnu, 44, participant

Jyotsna Maskay and her colleagues at LOOM saw this as an opportunity to try something new in their work. They developed a workshops series that would strengthen the feminist collective memory of Nepali women and recognise them as valuable, influential storytellers. They also, most crucially, wanted to **build the individual confidence and agency of the workshop participants**, to strengthen their ability to be the lead in their own stories and lives.

Usha, 26, who had left school at 16 to be married, said, *"I never had though that the life of ordinary women like mine will have the elements of a story. **I was always hesitant to speak openly with others and hardly could share my opinions**. As I analysed my life events and followed the guidance of [LOOM], I realised my life is full of many inspiring stories."*

The workshops also proved to have a crucial unexpected benefit of providing a safe space where women, particularly those from the LBTQI+ community, could confront past traumas and gain some closure to be able to move on with their lives.

*"I chose this specific event as my narrative as I have faced multiple problems, and was not able to share the event to anyone. **The workshop gave me the insights and safe space to share my feelings to other friends**. Before I felt I was the only person who is facing all the troubles and challenges, but after listening to many friends, every individual has their own experiences, and story."* Salina, 28, transgender rights activist

LOOM are keen to reach more women with these workshops, particularly in light of the recent pandemic in Nepal. They want to provide more women with the opportunity to reflect, connect and build a feminist consciousness for the battle to economic and social recovery when their lockdown is over.

Support our work
£65 could fund leadership training for a woman in Nepal. Click to donate now.



Interview with an activist

Agness Chindimba

Agness Chindimba (pictured above) is the founder and Executive Director of Deaf Woman Included (DWI), a grassroots organisation that works with deaf women from across all provinces in Zimbabwe. A determined disability rights activist, Agness travels the length and breadth of Zimbabwe increasing the knowledge and information available to women with disabilities.

Hi Agness! Can you explain to us what life was like growing up as a deaf woman in Zimbabwe?

When I was an undergraduate student at the University of Zimbabwe ***I was the only deaf student at the whole university****. It was there I experienced discrimination simply because I was deaf. My lecturer doubted my capability and made his bias clear in front of the whole class.*

How did that experience make you feel?

At first I felt very angry because of the stigma attached to disability but then I realised some people simply need to be taught to respect women with disabilities. That is when ***I learnt to advocate for myself and all those whose voices are not listened to****.*

Can you give us some examples of your activism work?

I have advocated for the inclusion of sign language as one of the official languages of Zimbabwe. It is now stated in the national Constitution. I continue to support women with disabilities to participate fully in their communities. Through initiatives such as advocating for disability friendly polling stations and developing greater understanding of



"Thinking about all the discrimination women with disabilities face makes me feel really sad and broken at times, but the fighting spirit in me won't let me rest."

COVID-19 Response

As Zimbabwe responds to the global pandemic, DWI have reported that much of the public service announcements on staying safe during COVID-19 have been in inaccessible formats therefore excluding people with disabilities from potentially lifesaving information. As Zimbabwe remains in lockdown, Agness has been producing online videos which communicate key information in sign language on ways of staying safe and pathways to reporting rising cases of domestic violence.

their right to vote, ***women with disabilities are able to make choices about their community's social, political and economic spheres****.*

Can you describe some of the challenges for women with disabilities in Zimbabwe?

More often than not they do not experience the same rights as others because our society still believes women with disabilities have no need to make choices. Because of this, ***women with disabilities suffer a lot of discrimination and even experience more gender-based violence****, particularly because most of them depend on their abusers for a living.*

How do you feel about the future for women with disabilities in Zimbabwe?

Over the past 25 years I feel we have achieved positive change but I feel we still fall short of what we could achieve. We have very good laws that are not being implemented and I feel this is not right. I hope Beijing+25 will bring real political and economic change and alleviate the problems being faced by women.

Photo: Agness (left) communicating in sign language with Simbisu (right), who is supported by Deaf Women Included in Gweru, Zimbabwe.

Support our work

We're continuing to support partners through COVID-19 recovery. To contribute, visit womankind.org.uk/donate



Photos: Attendees at the two-day workshop in February

Wellness, Self-care and Security for Women's Rights Leaders **in Uganda**

At the heart of Womankind's work is a vision; to strengthen women's rights organisations to *work together* to realise rights for women and girls.

The collective fight to realise women's rights continues to face setbacks and **women's rights activists are repeatedly attacked - physically, sexually, online and in other ways - as they challenge those who seek to maintain gender inequality**. Consistent exposure to attacks takes a physical, emotional and psychological toll on activists, but often goes unacknowledged and can lead to burnout with very serious repercussions on individuals and the organisations they lead.

In response, Womankind supported our partner **Women's International Peace Center** (**WIPC**) to create safe spaces where women's rights leaders can **come together to reenergise and find ways to bring wellness into their work** to help them sustain the fight for women's rights in the long term.

Over two days in February 2020, **WIPC** brought leaders in the Uganda women's movement together to address self-care and healing in a 'Feminist Leadership and Self-love camp'. The camp aimed to enable women leaders to reflect on their own emotional and physical wellbeing and to identify wellbeing practices that they could take back and use as a way to transform and sustain their movements. Women came to the camp from across Uganda and included women with disabilities, young women, and lesbian and bisexual women.

Through storytelling, art and writing therapy, participants explored their experiences



Photo source:
The Peace Centre

of illness. **Constant pressures to meet deadlines, perfectionism, online bullying, balancing gender roles as women leaders and a failure to acknowledge self and others were some of the factors contributing to ill health**. In crafting solutions, participants explored cultural models of wellness from across different regions of Uganda. Examples included bathing in hot springs, bead making, using herbs, birth, marriage and death rituals, storytelling and dance. A common thread throughout all these examples was the importance of collective wellbeing practices and how these are critical for maintaining sisterhood between women.

Ugandan women leaders left the camp with their own wellness plans and commitments to champion wellness in their organisations. The workshop was also the catalyst for another Womankind supported project - the development of a bespoke curriculum titled **Harnessing Our Power With Soul; Bespoke Curriculum for Transformational Leadership and Wellness**.

By speaking about wellness openly in a safe space, important relationships based on trust and honesty are nurtured. These connections will enhance and strengthen collective action between women and ensure health and longevity for the women's movement in Uganda into the future.

Read the report
Read through the tips for self-care developed at the workshop at bit.ly/wipc-wellness

Leave a legacy, **change the future**

We are living through a period of great change and uncertainty. But at Womankind we are determined that our work supporting women and girls must continue undeterred.

We are committed to closing the inequality gap for women and girls in Africa and Asia. Please help us secure a brighter future for the next generation by leaving a gift in your will.



£1,400

could train 50 prison staff in Zimbabwe on human rights and how they can better support women prisoners.



£4,395

could train 60 women leaders to raise awareness and promote the status of women with disabilities in Nepal



£9,140

could provide skills training for 200 women for a whole year in a safe house in Ethiopia

If you are interested in leaving a gift in your will to Womankind Worldwide, or perhaps have already left a gift to us, please let us know. Email your choice to Flo at **Flo.chester@womankind.org.uk** by clicking one of the following options:

☐ **I have already left a gift in my will to Womankind Worldwide**

☐ **I would like more information on leaving a gift in my will to Womankind Worldwide**
Please know that this is in no way a binding promise!



Get in touch

If you have any questions about leaving a gift in your will or would like further information please contact Flo via her email above or by phone at 020 3735 5558



Photo: Nilam

Women's voices

Nilam

Nilam was born a male child in a small community in rural Nepal. She shares how she learned to accept her true identity as a trans woman. Below Nilam details the abuse, discrimination and violence she, and the majority of the trans community, are subjected to in Nepal and across the world. Nilam attends regular workshops and training on her rights run by Mitini Nepal and is now a proud advocate for the LBTQI+ community.

"I belonged to a big family with a poor economic situation. I was only 10 when I started working as a stone worker; I sold firewood in the market and worked as a cleaner. This way, I supported my parents to run the household.

When I was young, I loved to play dolls indoor with my sisters at home rather than to go to the playground with my brothers. It was confusing and at times frustrating for me to be a boy and yet feel like a girl. ***Sometimes, I even felt like it was a disease that I was suffering from. I always asked myself "Am I abnormal?"***

At 14, I read an article about sex change and same sex attraction in Nepal. The article shared the lived experiences and stories of the people who identified themselves as transgender. ***That day, I felt like I got wings to fly****—I realised that I was normal like any other human beings I knew in my family and my community.*

It is sad and threatening that even today, the transgender people are not safe from the risk of getting raped, abused when they walk alone on the street. Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender & Intersex - there is no security and protection for us. ***We are constantly at risk of violence, abuse, harassment****.*

I am pursuing my dream to become renowned and successful make-up artist. From this life, ***I have learnt to accept myself and be proud of what I have done****. I dream of establishing a makeup institute where people who identify with Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LBTI) sexual identities will learn make-up skills and become independent.*

I will continue my activism for LBTQI+ rights. While we are trying to fight for our rights, I expect that our government enacts and implements our rights in their action. ***The government must walk the talk!"***

Support our work
£22 could train one woman as an ambassador for LBTQI+ rights in Nepal. Click to donate now.

Thank you for reading!

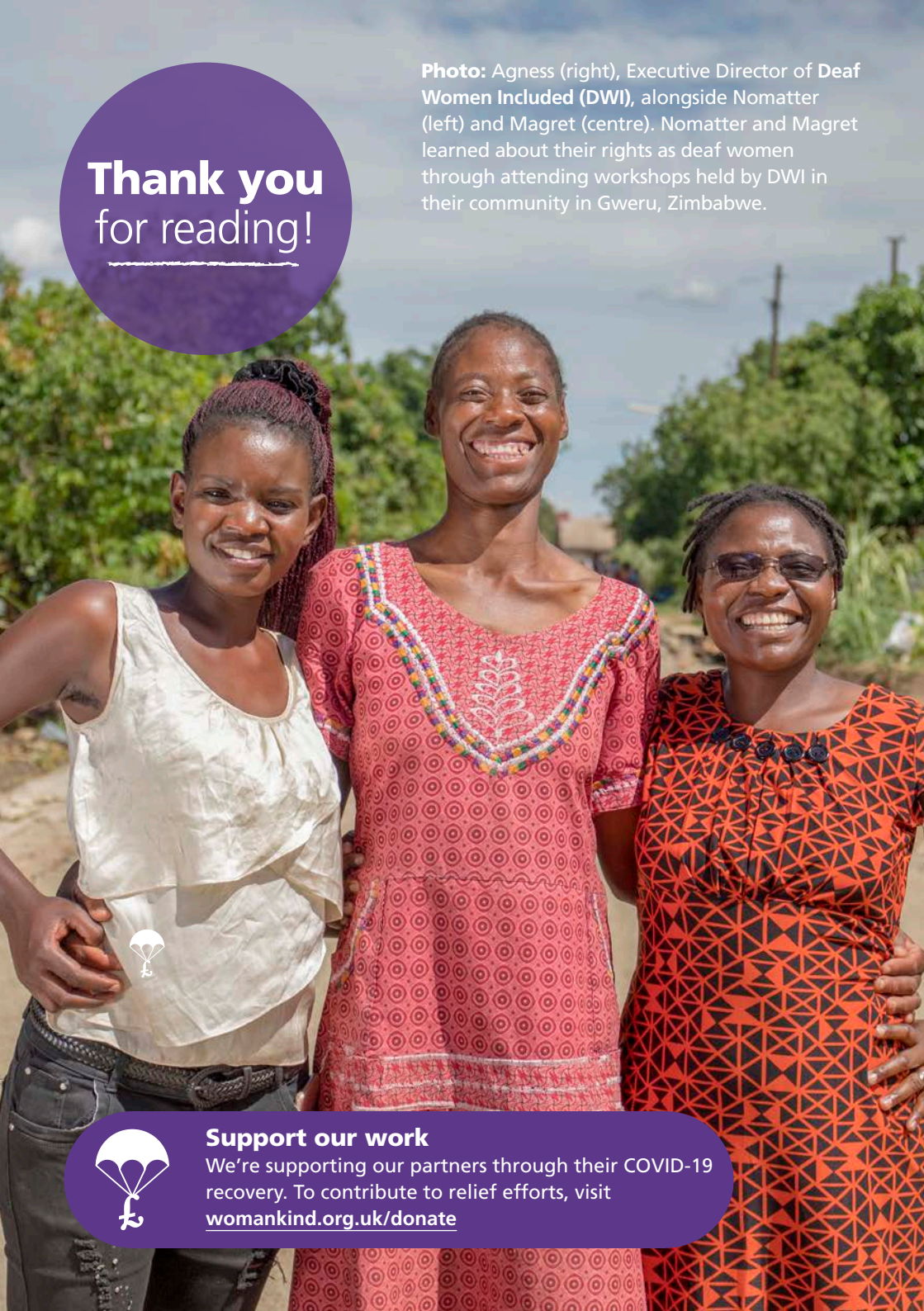


Photo: Agness (right), Executive Director of **Deaf Women Included (DWI)**, alongside Nomatter (left) and Magret (centre). Nomatter and Magret learned about their rights as deaf women through attending workshops held by DWI in their community in Gweru, Zimbabwe.

Support our work

We're supporting our partners through their COVID-19 recovery. To contribute to relief efforts, visit **womankind.org.uk/donate**