



# INSPIRING CHANGE

## Celebrating International Women's Day with the Anglican Alliance

Women in leadership are inspiring change in every region of the Anglican Communion. This resource brings you their stories and shows us how, in faith and perseverance, women have become key leaders in transforming their communities – working for justice and development and responding to human need with loving service.

Join the Anglican Alliance on International Women's Day as we celebrate women all over the world. And use our toolkits and Bible studies to help your church take action.

Women need access to education, healthcare, skills and finance to fulfil their potential. We can all play our part to make that a reality.

**Let's see women empowered to  
transform their communities!**



**ANGLICAN ALLIANCE**  
Development · Relief · Advocacy

# WOMEN'S VOICES

Here are some inspiring words from women around the Anglican Communion, who help to transform their communities and encourage others.

**“** I am a teacher in Honiara and I supervise the Home Economics department. I find it very challenging but very rewarding when there is a positive change in learning behaviour. It is encouraging to see pupils with enthusiasm to learn in the class and how they build their skills for a better quality of life and for future citizens. Being a leader in the school community is a challenge as parents, school administration and school authorities have expectations that must be fulfilled.

Whilst I am a full time teacher I am also studying leadership and educational management. This has inspired me to broaden my skills and is helping me to learn more about being an instrument of change. To work and study at the same time is a challenge but it has tested my skills in time management and my ability to fulfil my duties as a teacher, as a mother and as a student. This has encouraged me and gives me the confidence to achieve my goals and to continue serving the community.

I am currently taking on a new learning experience in professional development under the Commonwealth scholarship scheme, with the Anglican Alliance. This will enhance my ability to demonstrate and apply knowledge and skills in the school management setting and to address some of the issues encountered in the classroom.

Our role to reach out is not that easy, as women have certain boundaries and areas to consider, especially if you are working and being the mother at the same time. However, we have to move forward in decision-making and make positive contributions at the local level and wherever possible, such as in your village community, your family, your church and your nation.”

— Elizabeth Marahora, Solomon Islands



**Two volunteer home-based care workers in Zambia with their client, who has now recovered her health and plans to join the group.**

“In the last four years I have worked with SADD (Anglican Service for Diaconia and Development) on the issues of human rights. We have called the church to reflect on the theme and reality of gender-based violence, especially domestic violence against women.

In order to facilitate the debate with local congregations SADD produced a resource to build capacity in local communities and equip them to change the structural context of violence against women. Last year SADD presented the first version of the booklet to the

Church in Brazil. This material was launched in all dioceses and missionary districts and they are now working together to keep the theme alive.

This year we are launching a second booklet to allow the work to continue, going deeper into some themes and talking more about the relation between gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS.”

— Sandra Andrade, Brazil

“When I was a young girl, life was difficult because my parents were not very well to do and were not educated. Sometimes we couldn't afford to go to school and had to work instead.

Now I live in the Diocese of Zonkwa with my husband, who is the bishop. I am determined to be an influence among vulnerable women and girls, and bring about change.

We have held seminars and retreats for women at least once a month. As time went on more and more women began to attend - some even crossed rivers and walked for miles so they would not be left out.

During our conferences women and girls are trained on how to make items such as cleaning products, disinfectants and cake baking. Now those skills can sustain them. As a result of this teaching, the women now own their programmes; they do their own research; they bring attention to issues that concern their well-being. Many of them now seek training to improve their economic livelihoods.

We still have a long way to go, but we will be steady and surely we will get there. We live by Philippians 4:13 which says, “I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.”

Women are stakeholders in changing their community. She should believe in change, accept change, practise change, preach change and influence change. She should actively participate in decision-making, both in the Church, in the community and in politics. We need to look up to God, ask Him and trust Him for change.”

— Rhoda Kwashi, Nigeria

“I am the chairperson of our Home Based Care group. As church members we have given ourselves to help our neighbours who are sick. We visit them every week. I feel very happy when I think of the people we have helped. Before we started, there used to be a lot of deaths in our community. Now none of our clients are even bedridden - as they are regaining their health. We have helped people to get medication and we bring food supplements from the church. We also help women with empowerment: small funds to set up a business.

Through our training we have learnt a lot about health and diseases. We teach our clients and their families. Sometimes people affected by HIV or TB are deserted by their families, so we encourage the families to come close again. We feel we have achieved a lot. I am inspired that the people we support are recovering. It feels a noble thing to look after sick people in our community and we have earned respect from others.”

— Bwalya, Zambia

“I see it as a huge privilege and a gift to be able to do something alongside Archbishop Justin. It also comes with a responsibility:

you see what is going on and you look to see what God might be saying to you, and how you might respond.

I recently met an Archbishop's spouse who said that she 'grows children and plants'. Her ministry involves placing children with foster families. After the war in her country, she was involved in helping children to trace their families. She realised how many children there were who did not have families. It was then that the seed was sown. She found a job that would give her training. Now she has established a centre for working with families and fostering children. I was very inspired to see this work coming out of a place of prayer.

I met so many other women on our trip who talked about having "a number of children 'plus'..." The 'plus' were the orphans from family and friends who have been welcomed into their families with open arms."

— **Caroline Welby, England**

"Christian morals, Church vision and mission, and the social need to live with dignity and aspiration, inspires me to work in church ministries to bring a positive change in society.

At the Church of Bangladesh, five ministries focus on women's empowerment at community level. More than 3,000 women are actively involved in different activities for the improvement of their families and societies based on the Christian faith.

Women have huge potential. And the voices of women are beginning to rise against injustice—they are now more aware about their rights, and what to do if there is violence against women or inequality in access to services and resources.

The key role that women play in society is very prominent in the Church of Bangladesh, and women continue to transform the community so that they can live better, with dignity and aspiration."

— **Janet Sarker, Bangladesh**

## NANCY'S STORY

### Being Salt and Light

Nancy lives in the hills in central Kenya. A few years ago Nancy's church started a programme called 'Umoja', which means 'together'. In church they reflected on the Bible – what it means to be salt and light in your community. They also looked at the story of Jesus feeding the five thousand. They realised that Jesus asked the community to look to their own resources first – the loaves and the fish.

### Identifying assets and needs

The church and local community then began to analyse what resources they had amongst themselves and how they could use these to transform their lives. The facilitator also shared some new skills for farming.

### Trying out new skills

Nancy was inspired by the 'Umoja' process. She learnt how to raise fish and made her own small fish pond. Now she has made two large fish ponds and has a business selling fish. She helps her neighbours by giving them baby fish to start their own ponds. Nancy has also learnt other skills. She now turns the waste from her three cows into bio-gas, which is healthier than burning wood for cooking fuel.

### Working with others

Nancy feels very blessed – her family is now safe and has enough to eat. Nancy decided to start a small school to help the youngest children in their community. She has also joined others to advocate with the local government to set up a market place on the road near their village so they can sell their produce. In church, people give thanks – they are sharing 'good news' with others.

## BIBLE STUDY

The story of Tabitha (Dorcas) in Acts 9 tells of an inspiring woman who devoted herself to the needs of others. Through her faithfulness, Tabitha is a channel for the transforming love of God in her community.

- Read Acts 9:36-42

Now in Joppa there was a disciple whose name was Tabitha, which in Greek is Dorcas. She was devoted to good works and acts of charity. At that time she became ill and died.

When they had washed her, they laid her in a room upstairs. Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, who heard that Peter was there, sent two men to him with the request, "Please come to us without delay."

So Peter got up and went with them; and when he arrived, they took him to the room upstairs. All the widows stood beside him, weeping and showing tunics and other clothes that Dorcas had made while she was with them.

Peter put all of them outside, and then he knelt down and prayed. He turned to the body and said, "Tabitha, get up." Then she opened her eyes, and seeing Peter, she sat up. He gave her his hand and helped her up. Then calling the saints and widows, he showed her to be alive.

This became known throughout Joppa, and many believed in the Lord.

## DISCUSSION

- How did Tabitha respond to the needs in her community?
- What effect did her witness and miraculous recovery have on others?
- How can women and men today follow Tabitha's example?
- What is the message of the story for us today?

### Understanding our context

Identify women in your community and country who inspire change – some may be recognised leaders; some may quietly go about helping others.

Jesus asked us to be salt and light:

- How are these women salt and light in their communities?
- How can we be salt and light?
- What do women need to become empowered as leaders?



## RESPOND

- Hold a ceremony or service to honour inspiring women in your community—both those who are well known and those who quietly help others.
- Identify where women can access skills, including literacy and livelihood skills. If possible, hold an Information Day and invite local government and local organisations who can help.
- Encourage women to form self-help groups, including savings groups.
- Find out if there is a 'church and community mobilisation' programme in your province (CCMP, or 'Umoja'). Connect with them to see if training is available.

## PRAYING

In prayer we bring our hopes and needs to God and seek guidance.

*Loving God, you bring us Good News - help us to be good news to others. You give us gifts - help us to use these gifts to bring change in our families and communities. You give us hope - help us to bring hope to others. Amen.*

## WOMEN WORKING TOGETHER

In Burundi the Mothers' Union runs a Literacy and Financial Education Programme with local women's groups. Gatarina is from the programme. She said, "I'm an orphan and I didn't go to school and told myself that I couldn't do anything. But then I heard about the Mothers' Union literacy programme that was helping people learn to read and write. So I came and we learnt together. Now I am able to write for others and I have been elected as the leader of my local committee! I thank Mothers' Union for this, I feel very proud!"

Joining up with Five Talents, the Anglican micro-finance agency, there are now savings groups. Each week women, and now men too, gather together to collect savings. Members can then borrow a lump sum to invest in a small business. The youngest member uses her schooling to keep the group accounts on a board. As a result women are gaining financial independence and can manage their own lives. They can take part in household decision-making, community politics and leadership.



Mothers' Union Finance and Literacy group, Burundi



International Women's Day workshop in Bangladesh

## LINK WITH OTHERS

There are thousands of Anglican women all over the Communion who play leading roles in transforming their communities. There are also many Anglican agencies committed to supporting women's empowerment.

**You can connect with:**

**The Mothers' Union**

<http://www.mothersunion.org>

**International Anglican Family Network**

<http://iafn.anglicancommunion.org>

**International Anglican Women's Network**

<http://iawn.anglicancommunion.org>

**Umoja/CCMP**

[http://www.tearfund.org/en/about\\_us/what\\_we\\_do\\_and\\_where/initiatives/umoja](http://www.tearfund.org/en/about_us/what_we_do_and_where/initiatives/umoja)

**Five Talents**

<http://www.fivetalents.org>

And every year women around the Communion attend the United Nations' Commission on the Status of Women in New York (UNCSW). This year the theme is 'Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls'. You can follow their activities at: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw58-2014>.

## CONTACT US!

We gain strength as we support each other through sharing our work. So let us know about women inspiring change in your communities!

- You can send your stories and photos to us at: [anglicanalliance@aco.org](mailto:anglicanalliance@aco.org)
- Or call us on: +44(0)20 7313 3928
- And tell us what you are doing to mark International Women's Day!
- News from around the world will be posted on our website at: <http://www.anglicanalliance.org>

**Mothers' UNION**  
Christian care for families

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