

ActionAid hosts 'Survivors' Runway' fashion show for acid attack victims

ActionAid hosted 'Survivors' Runway', a fashion show with survivors of acid attacks, on Tuesday 10th October 2017 at The Truman Brewery, London. The fashion show was hosted by the international charity to highlight its work tackling this discrimination against women and girls worldwide. The aim is to break the culture of silence for all women and girls everywhere who live in fear of violence.

The women leading the event, called the 'Survivors' Runway', who were all acid attack survivors from Bangladesh, wore clothes by fashion designer and former international model Bibi Russell. Bibi, keen to help survivors of acid attacks fight for their rights, joined forces with ActionAid Bangladesh and launched a similar event in Dhaka for International Women's Day 2017. Following its success, eight participants – women, men and one teenage girl – who have never travelled outside Bangladesh, expressed a wish to come to the UK to highlight this issue to an international audience.

Bibi Russell said: *"These survivors are showing enormous courage and resilience by taking part. My involvement is a tribute to people who have experienced such terrible acts of violence. I want to see them be respected, have equal rights and be included in society. Above all I want to see that their human dignity is restored, this is the most important thing. I have seen their sparkle and beauty and I want to help show this to the world. I ask everyone, please give them a chance."*



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About ActionAid

ActionAid supports survivors of violence in some of the world's poorest places by working with local women's groups and public services to defend women's rights and making sure survivors get the care they need and the backing of the law.

Violence against women and girls is one of the most widespread human rights abuses affecting around 1 in 3 one in three women worldwide. It happens everywhere and takes many forms: domestic abuse, sexual harassment, rape as a weapon of war, forced marriage, female genital mutilation and acid attacks. Violence that targets women and girls is rooted in deeply entrenched patriarchal norms, restricting women's and girls' control over their bodies and lives.

Farah Kabir, Country Director for ActionAid Bangladesh said: *“Unfortunately, in Bangladesh we have acid violence because of gender discrimination and greed. We want to remind everyone that this injustice could happen to any of us. At ActionAid, we work to ensure all women are equally treated and empowered. We value the inner beauty of these women and girls. It’s vital that we act together to make our women and girls secure and live with dignity – we cannot sit back and accept such a heinous crime.”*



Legislation restricting the sale of acid

In Bangladesh, for example, ActionAid helped lobby for legislation restricting the import and sale of acid. This led to two acts being passed in 2002 – the Acid Control Act and the Acid Crime Prevention Act – and reported cases have since declined to under 100 per year.

In 2004, ActionAid also helped to establish one of the first networks run by survivors of acid violence, which currently

has 260 members. The network is called Shetu Bandhan Gori and helps survivors reintegrate into society as well as running campaigns to help educate the local community and ensure local services and policies are inclusive of their needs.



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Girish Menon, Chief Executive for ActionAid UK said: "I am overwhelmed by the courage and determination of these individuals who have travelled from Bangladesh to break the culture of silence on violence against women and girls. These attacks are just one example of widespread violence perpetrated against women and girls by societies that don't respect equal rights and who seek control."

"Today we celebrate a success story. Following a grassroots campaign led by ActionAid in Bangladesh, legislation was introduced in 2002 which led to a dramatic decline in the

number attacks. This kind of community-led action lies at the heart of ActionAid's work around the world and reason that we have put the rights of women and girls at the heart of everything we do."

ActionAid is an international charity (No. 01295174) working with the poorest women and girls in the world, changing lives for good. For further information visit www.actionaid.org.uk