

A woman in a high-visibility vest is holding a large cardboard sign with the text "MY VAGINA IS NOT MY CV" written in red and blue marker. She is looking off to the side with a serious expression. In the background, other people are visible, some wearing orange and white safety vests, and one person is wearing a red shirt with a logo that says "ONE MILLION CLIMATE JOBS".

MY VAGINA IS
NOT MY CV

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#MenstruationMonday & more

Women affected by mining demand their rights

Women said there was nothing to celebrate during Women's Month— they protested outside Shanduka Coal to draw attention to their struggles which government and mining companies persistently ignore.

Reflecting on Women's Month

Women's Month has come and gone, but did our country achieve anything? I think not. Many of the events held by government and the private sector during August had little political significance for the majority of South African women and girls.

Although AASA held a number of important activities and events in August, these were a continuation of the work that we do every day and have been doing for the past few years. Our work is not confined to a month of commemorating the struggles of women—the struggle against patriarchy and for women's liberation is an everyday struggle.

We started off with our big bang—the *Menstruation Monday* campaign where the Women's Rights and Campaigns teams facilitated weekly lunchtime talks to raise awareness about the impact of menstruation on girls' education; increase knowledge of women's

and girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights; share information and build understanding about the history of Women's Day; and to increase knowledge about the struggles of courageous, resilient South African women.

In partnership with the Black Sash and the Economic Policy Research Institute (EPRI), AASA hosted a seminar on the impact of unequal access to social security on young women. The ten young urban women who attended this seminar not only challenged the organisers about their approaches to involve them, but totally transformed the proceedings. On the last day of the seminar, the young women clearly articulated their experiences, claimed their space and ensured their voices were heard.

The SeVISSA Project hosted a dialogue on barriers to girls'



education, where AASA presented the findings of the baseline research on sexual violence and safety in schools.

AASA believes that we can only bring about transformation and women's liberation through ongoing programmes with young women and girls like the ones we are involved in.

In order to bring about the kind of change that is needed, what's required is much more than a month. Working towards a world free of violence, inequality and poverty, demands commitment and political will from each of us, every day.

Women affected by mining demand their rights

Earlier this month, under the slogan *defending our lives—demanding our right to water, food and healthy environment*, Women Affected by Mining United in Action (WAMUA) from the communities of Carolina, Ermelo, Middleburg and Witbank protested outside Shanduka Coal Mine to make their grievances heard. The women said there is nothing to celebrate this Women's Month and will instead use the opportunity to draw attention to their struggles which government and mining companies persistently ignore.

ActionAid South Africa's Head of Programmes—Emily Craven said, "The stripping was about trying to make the point that mines strip women all the time, they strip them of their rights and their dignity and it was about telling the mines that 'if you want to strip us then you need to come face-to-face with what we look like when we've had our dignity and our rights stripped away.' The stripping showed the passion that the women were feeling at the time. I think it really served its purpose of shocking and rocking the men standing there representing the mine management."

The women handed over a list of demands to the mine's management, who said they had listened to the women's grievances and acknowledged that many were valid. The managers said they would meet with Shanduka's senior management and will revert back to the community.

Christopher Rutledge, AASA's Mining and Extractives Coordinator applauded the protest saying, "These types of actions are important to restore the dignity of women living in mining affected communities and for them to claim their rights and hold duty bearers to account."

<<Check out the video>>





AASA at work in LRPs <<Check out the video>>

AASA conducted Participatory Review and Reflection Processes (PRRPs) across all the 6 Local Rights Programmes (LRPs) located in the provinces of Limpopo, Northern Cape, Kwa-Zulu Natal and Eastern Cape during the months of July and August. The aim is to talk to community members in order to understand their views; to assess the impact of our activities; and to find out about the key challenges facing different communities in these areas.

In Greytown, Kwa-Zulu Natal, AASA is working in Cranham Village—LRP 7. During the PRRP, AASA chatted to women in the community who said with ActionAid's help, the community was able to build another classroom in the local school and the chicken farming project is helping families in need.



“I feel that as women we should stand in solidarity to fight for an equal society.”

Mme Chauke from Mokopane, Limpopo- LRP 8

August in LRPs

“August has been a busy month here at AASA. We held a series of activities to mark Women’s Month both at head office and LRP level.

Internally we also wanted to create a space for staff to think about what Women’s Month means to us. Our Menstruation Mondays provided a great space to come together as an office, and also encouraged us to collect a mass of sanitary products that we will share with girls in our programmes.

At the same time, the Participatory Review and Reflection Processes were underway in our LRPs, where AASA staff spent a week in each LRP.

This process not only allowed us to take pulse of the impact of our work in the LRPs, but will support our 2016 planning processes which are gearing up over the next two months.”

- Emily Craven, Head of Programmes



Justice for Thembelihle

After almost 9 months of delays, the trial of Thabo Molefe, accused of raping and murdering Thembelihle Sokhela in September 2014, began on Monday 27 July 2015 in the Pretoria North Magistrate's Court. Thembelihle was one of many black lesbian women in South Africa who have been victims of homophobic hate crimes. AASA partners—Rainbow Activist Alliance (RAA) and the Forum for the Empowerment of Women (FEW) went to Pretoria to monitor proceedings and demand justice for Thembelihle after undergoing criminal justice training at AASA offices.

Vanessa Ludwig – activist and consultant for AASA and FEW, says there is a growing trend of courts handing down lenient sentences for heinous crimes. “We feel that sentencing in this country is too low, particularly when it comes to crimes against women, and especially when there are clear judicial guidelines for the courts on minimum sentencing.”

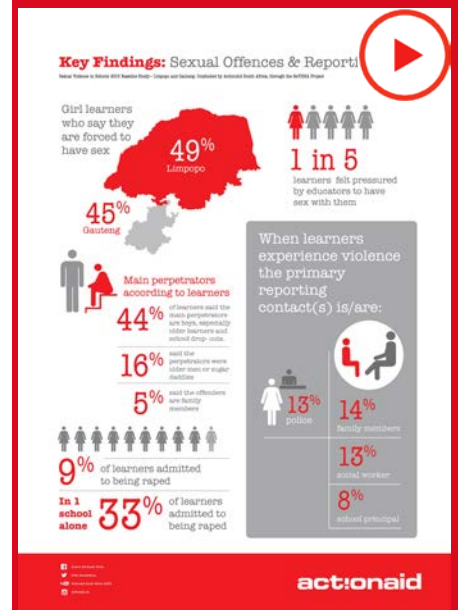
<<Check out the video>>



Sexual violence and safety in South African schools

AASA is part of a consortium implementing a project that seeks to address Sexual Violence in Schools in South Africa (SeVISSA). AASA launched its baseline research conducted in SeVISSA-participating schools located in Gauteng and Limpopo. The launch garnered a great deal of media attention, and consultant researcher, Thevan Naidoo, was also interviewed on *Talk Radio 702* by prominent radio host, Redi Tlhabi.

<<Listen to the podcast >>



Mbuso Linda with Emily Craven and 55 others
August 17 at 1:18pm · BlackBerry · Edited · 🌐

"Why are condoms free but sanitary towels are not? Menstruation should not be a taboo subject there is nothing shocking, dirty, embarrassing or shameful about it" - Fatima Shabodien Action Aid South Africa

It's not 'always' the case that every women and girl can afford a sanitary towel

-Ice... See More

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Dikelo Mamiala, Fatima Vally, Indomitabile Philanthropist and 3,616 others like this.

3,317 shares

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Menstruation Monday

As part of Women's Month, as well as a build-up to a bigger sustained campaign around demanding girls' right to sanitation, AASA staff collected sanitary pads to donate to local schools. According to an on-going study, girls in SA miss 10% of their school time due to menstrual related issues, while 78% of girls say one of the main reasons for absenteeism is not being able to afford pads. Every Monday—**#MenstruationMonday**, staff came together to talk openly about menstruation and discuss how a lack of access to sanitation in schools contributes to high drop-out rates, negatively impacting girls' education, which perpetuates the cycle of inequality and poverty in South Africa.

The campaign gained a lot of traction on social media, particularly after AASA's Activista leader, Mbuso Ice Ngubane posted a picture on the Activista page which was shared over 3000 times. AASA also set up a collection point and display at the International Secretariat in Rosebank, where international staff donated sanitary products.

AASA has now organised a staff task team which will be coordinated by the Women's Rights team to take the campaign forward with government and the private sector.

Safe Cities & Women's Day

During Women's Month and as part of [#SafeCitiesForWomen](#) activities, AASA staff joined thousands of people in Johannesburg for the Total Sports Women's Race in support of the Pink Drive for cancer awareness, and to commemorate the women's protest march of 9 August 1956.

Defence Unlimited also visited AASA to give self-defense training, providing staff with some safe and clever techniques to escape dangerous situations.



Working in occupied Palestine

AASA had the pleasure of hosting Ibrahim Ibraigheth, Head of Programmes at Action Aid Palestine. It was Ibrahim's first time in Africa- mainly due to the restrictions placed on his movement for the past 32 years.

During his stay Ibrahim spoke at the University of Witwatersrand about land grabs, dispossession and human rights. AASA also co-hosted an event with the University of Johannesburg's Palestinian Solidarity Forum and the Afro Middle - East Centre, where Ibrahim talked about ActionAid's work in occupied Palestine.

A visit from ActionAid Pakistan

Our office welcomed Iftikhar Nizami, ActionAid Pakistan's new Country Director. Iftikhar shared some really interesting facts about Pakistan, including its historical colonial identity; the status of women; stark inequalities on the basis of gender, caste and religion; government corruption and its division of the national budget. Iftikhar said that government only spends 3% of the national budget on social services!



Watch this space...

AASA has more exciting work and events coming up over the next few months:

- Soweto Pride
- ActionAid partners up with the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization
- Critical society session on social security
- Violence against women webinar
- Mining and Extractives release their latest research
- 16 Days of Activism



Editorial

Follow AASA on social media

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Text and compilation: Katherine V Robinson
Photography and video: Mbuso Ice Ngubane
and Katherine V Robinson



<http://www.actionaid.org/south-africa>

Contributors: Michelle Festus and Emily Craven