

## **SLIDE 1 TITLE**

### **Slide 2: History**

The Associated Country Women of the World was founded in 1929 to bring rural women and their organisations all over the world together, and in so doing address the challenges they faced because of the isolation of their communities, discrimination against women, and their lack of standing in political processes.

ACWW's membership spans over 50 countries, and since 1947 we have passed more than 180 policy resolutions by popular vote among member societies. The key concept behind each of these is the empowerment of rural women in all their diversity, and this continues to be our driving priority.

### **SLIDE 3: ACWW's work - AMPLIFY**

ACWW exists to amplify the voices of rural women, collecting factual data on their living conditions. ACWW then uses that information to do a few different things:

1. Hold governments to account for areas where they've agreed to support Rural Women and have not yet done so
2. Contribute to agreements and statements that suggest national law and policy changes to benefit rural communities
3. Draw attention to the unique role of Rural Women in global food systems.

The photo seen on this slide is of a former member named Mrs Roberts, at the then recently opened United Nations Headquarters in New York, speaking with delegates from Iraq and India in 1953.

### **SLIDE 4: ACWW'S work - CONNECT**

ACWW exists to connect rural women, knowing that our voice is so much stronger when we speak together. Through Triennial and Area Conferences, as well as opportunities to connect through social media and via the network maintained at Central Office, ACWW can highlight the way that similar issues face rural communities globally. Friendships are built, and women all over the world can learn from each other.

These photos are from Committee Meetings and World Conferences, WI Pahang in Malaysia as well as photos from project partners including Give Them Hope Liberia and Ntengwe for Community Development in Zimbabwe.

### **SLIDE 5: ACWW'S work - MOBILISE**

ACWW exists to mobilise rural women to be leaders in their communities, producing resources that can be used to educate at a grassroots level. We participate in awareness-raising campaigns on a whole host of issues from domestic violence in rural communities to reducing food waste.

These featured photos are all examples of women mobilising in their communities as leaders

Photos:

- Project 1095 Income Generation ECODEP Kenya (top left)
- The Khovd Women's Empowerment Summit (top right)
- agriterra workshop on organisational management and leadership development at the East, West, Central Africa Area Conference in Nairobi in 2000 (middle row left)
- ACWW Representatives at an NGO Conference in Geneva in 195 (middle row right)
- International Forum of NGOs in Official Partnership with UNESCO 10 year-old Roux Ridler, who travelled from British Columbia, Canada with her mother Tracy who was speaking on the need for engagement with Indigenous communities (bottom left)
- State visit with Queen Azizah of Malaysia in 2021 (bottom middle)
- delegates voting during the Triennial World Conference in Melbourne, in 2019 (bottom right)

#### **SLIDE 6: ACWW'S work - EMPOWER**

ACWW exists to empower. We empower by recognising that rural women have a voice and that that voice has gone unheard for far too long. We empower by funding grassroots projects that improve whole communities one woman at a time. We empower by raising awareness of international treaties and agreements that protect the rights of women and by involving our member societies in treaty negotiations at an international level. We empower through friendship and collaboration at our Area and Triennial World Conferences.

These photos are from Project 1103 Seed grants for Sustainable Farming with a training on organic farming in India in 2021 seen on the top left; Project 788 in 2009 the APWA held training sessions for teachers and set up 10 primary schools in rural and semi-rural areas of Pakistan; a beneficiary from smiling proudly from Project 1132 Ensuring Seed Security through Community Seed Banks in Zimbabwe in 2022; and finally Europe Area President Afrodita Roman at the Europe Area Conference in Glasgow in 2022.

#### **SLIDE 7: Rural Community Development 3 focus areas**

Now to discuss the importance of Rural Community Development in ACWW's work.

ACWW's work can be divided into three areas of focus: Climate-smart Agriculture, Rural Women's Health, and Education and Community Development.

We fund development projects in these areas, which not only improves rural communities all over the world, but also contributes to effective and informed lobbying and advocacy.

#### **SLIDE 8: Rural Community Development capacity building**

Alongside Core Projects which respond to local priorities, we work with strategic partners to add Capacity Building modules to each project, strengthening impact and sustainability.

While we now fund fewer Projects each year, we continue our annual spending at the same level, so there is greater investment in each community

The funding of grassroots development projects has been one of ACWW's priorities since the late 1970s, and it has gone through many changes as expertise in international development has expanded, and more culturally and locally sensitive methods have become the norm. Capacity building modules create opportunities that cater to the needs of the community we are working with, developing skills training and workshops that are relevant to them.

This photo is an example of a Capacity Building module as a part of Project 1131: Entrepreneurship Training Programme for Unemployed Rural Women with the Organisation: Heritage Charity Foundation farmers during a training session. Participants received training on organic farming and climate mitigation to promote a reliable income.

#### **SLIDE 9: 2024-25 current projects**

#### **SLIDE 10: WORD funded in June 2024 with a grant of £7,444 for the project Sustainable Cultivation of Vegetables & Greens by 50 Dalit Women Farmers.**

Building the capacity of 50 Dalit Arunthathiyar women farmers through training in sustainable horticulture methods. This project includes education on practices using indigenous vegetables and greens cultivation to make a good harvest that will improve the cultivation of their small plots of land and provide a sustainable livelihood, increase nutrition of family members and improve the village environment.

Aims and objectives for this project are to organize orientation, intensive training, field demonstrations, field farmers school, distribute indigenous seeds for crops such as gourds, okra, chillies, and aubergine, as well as herbal pesticides and crop tonics, to maximise land usage. There will also be participation in seed collection and exchange to develop a seed bank for future use to share with other farmers in the community.

Key updates:

The participants have attended orientation training for the project. They have also attended an intensive 5-day training on sustainable horticulture which covered nursery formation and preparation, sowing, transplantation, application of farming inputs, and weed, pest and

disease control. Alongside the intensive training sessions, the participants also attend farmers' field school at a nearby village to gain further experience learning from established and cultivated land.

The participants were given the support costs for land preparation (tilling, creating boundaries around their plots) and seeds and farming inputs (compost, crop tonics, herbal pesticides and hand sprayers) were distributed to the participants.

#### **SLIDE 11: WORD**

They are now in the harvesting stage of the project – WORD staff will help the farmers market their produce and establish a seed bank for the next season. The seed bank will be an asset during the second part of this project to sustain and carry forward project activities into the next year on their own.

When submitting their progress reports, the question of sustainability is important to continue thinking about throughout implementation - How the impacts of the project will benefit participants and community members in the long term. WORD have shared that regular follow up family and land visits are being done by team members. The seed bank is an important element that comes into play as it will serve the distribution of a variety of seeds for project farmers and farmers in the target villages if they wish to take up indigenous seed varieties. This project of 50 women farmers receiving training and one year of practical experience in successful horticulture will help allow them to help and train fellow farmers in their neighbourhoods and villages. These sustainable agriculture practices can be shared and the learning may continue to help the entire community raise local crops, gain technical skills, and increase a healthy well-balanced diet.

#### **SLIDE 12: EMAC – funded in June 2024 with a grant of £8,346 for the project Towards Health Equity: Empower Women through Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health Services**

This project is focused on addressing effects of FGM and inadequate access to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in Simanjiro District. Despite legal prohibitions, many women in the area still undergo FGM. The District is inhabited with Maasai communities with very strong beliefs in their traditions and customs where women do not have a control over their bodies and are denied rights to Sexual and Reproductive Health. To address these issues, the project proposes a social behaviour change (SBC) approach rooted in changing the social-cultural norms, beliefs and practices.

The goal is to change the traditions and beliefs about FGM and SRHR and improve how women can access sexual and reproductive health services and socio-economic resources. By working closely with the community's culture and using existing by laws in place, the

project aims to create a place where women can make their own informed and independent choices about their health and well-being.

The project's activities include training Community Health Workers to educate their communities and act as a bridge between the community and health facilities. Their proximity to the communities ensures timely dissemination of health services and information, fostering trust and accessibility. So far the project has conducted training to Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs), Traditional Practitioners (TPs), expectant and lactating mothers, and their spouses on Sexual Reproductive Health Rights (SRHRs) including the dangers of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). Emphasizing male involvement was key, given their decision-making roles in nomadic communities. This approach helps create a supportive environment for women's health and encourages broader acceptance of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR).

The project has also conducted training to school children; both male and female students to become peer educators to advocate for SRHR within schools and homes. These student champions are instrumental in spreading knowledge and promoting positive health behaviours among their peers.

**SLIDE 13: Education and Community Development at RUT: funded in December 2024 with a grant of £9,410 for the project Promote Girls' Education Inclusion in Alignment with the Tanzania 2022 School Dropout Re-entry Guideline Initiative**

The Dodoma region in Tanzania faces a critical issue with high school-dropout rates, with 13,208 primary and 8,846 secondary school girls dropping out in 2022. Traditionally, girls who became pregnant or were truant were barred from continuing their education. However, the new Tanzania 2022 School Dropout Re-entry Guideline now allows these girls to re-enroll. Despite this policy shift, significant barriers to re-enrolment persist.

It aims to facilitate the re-entry of these girls into the education system and provide alternative pathways, including vocational education and skills training. The project will conduct monthly awareness-raising campaigns to encourage school re-entry for out-of-school girls. Key features of this project include financial literacy training, access to start-up capital, mentorship all aimed at facilitating the empowerment of adolescent girls and young women.

**SLIDE 14: For more on Projects**

To learn more about Projects at ACWW, please visit our website where you can find photos, Project Snapshots, Fact Files and more about current and past projects.

**SLIDE 15: Advocacy**

Now to segway into the importance of International Advocacy in the work of ACWW. It is important to understand that our projects, and the processes we use to amplify the voices of our members are completely and vitally linked. This means that the impacts of our projects are only sustainable when they exist in an enabling environment, with progressive legislation within local and national governing bodies.

ACWW approaches this process from two directions.

1. Empowering women to take their place in decision-making in their communities This can be achieved by promoting awareness of the rights of women, providing access to a network of supportive women, and sharing knowledge.
2. 2. Engaging with UN processes that hold governments to account when they fail rural women This can be achieved through our consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council, where we have access to key deliberative opportunities. We use our network and contacts through multiple governments, organisations, and mechanisms at the UN to lobby for the rights of rural women globally.

To highlight this phrase “Sustainability = systemic change.” Systemic change means ‘changes to systems.’ The systems we are referring to here are those that keep women from attaining full equality in all things. It is only by tackling these issues from both directions that we can bring about true sustainability.

These photos are from the UN CSC 2019 with former UN Committee Chair Marie Kenny, who is now the current Area President for Canada, and Bonnie Teeple Area President for the USA.

ACWW World President Magdie de Kock meeting with His Excellency Mr Nkosinathi Emmanuel Mthethwa, Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of the Republic of South Africa to UNESCO, and Ambassador to France, during the 15th International Forum of NGOs at UNESCO. Magdie was speaking at the Forum on 'Transforming Mentalities' about the work ACWW does to support the empowerment of rural women in a panel with three other major women's organisations. The photo was taken at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, France.

Trustee & Board Lead on Partnerships, Claire Mahon of New Zealand, photographed with two delegates at the South Pacific Area Conference

The final photo is of ACWW reps sitting among other women's groups and organisations at the FAO 51st Session Council in 1968.

### **SLIDE 16: Advocacy Partners**

ACWW work with The United Nations Economic and Social Council. With ECOSOC, we have access to critically important mechanisms such as the Commission on the Status of Women, the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, the Human Rights Council, and other processes

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. With the FAO, we advocate for the importance of family farming, women's land rights, Indigenous seed protection, food security and food sovereignty.

ACWW is also a member of the NGO Major Group, one of the Major Groups and Other Stakeholders at the UN established as part of the 2030 Agenda. We work with likeminded organisations from around the world to advance our goals and ensure our 14 members are heard.

ACWW is an elected member of the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee for the 2020- 2022 mandate. We represent the more than 400 NGOs who hold Official Partnership status with UNESCO, and in 2021 ACWW chaired the 12th International Forum of NGOs in Official Partnership.

The UN Education and Scientific Council. At UNESCO we advocate for equitable access to quality education at all levels for women in all their diversity, the importance of traditional and inherited knowledge, Indigenous languages, and global citizenship

### **SLIDE 17: How you can join us**

By becoming an ACWW member, you join a network that supports rural women in connecting their voices, so that the issues they face and the solutions they raise are heard and acknowledged by national and international policymakers and legislators. ACWW exists for women who want to actively engage with international policy and the empowerment of rural women. You can join as an individual, or if you have a group that is interested in supporting the work of ACWW, you can join as a society. To join, you can visit our website or email Central Office.

West Kent FWI are a member society of ACWW, so by proxy you are all members of an ACWW member society. However, if you are interested in staying more in touch with ACWW, your local WI village or town branch can also join as ACWW members as well.

### **SLIDE 18: How you can support our work**

- To support our work, you can...
- Join as a member!
- Donate to the Rural Women in Action Fund – Donations to this fund will support all of ACWW's work, from projects to advocacy to education and awareness-raising, with the belief that supporters will come to understand how vital it is that all these elements are connected and cohesive.
- Participate in surveys and opportunities for advocacy as they arise. We encourage you to sign up for our newsletter, that can be done on our website, and you will get

updates from our World President, Central Office, and the chance to participate in some of our advocacy endeavours.

- Engage with our work by acting on resolutions, sharing our social media posts, and spreading the word!

#### **SLIDE 19: Contact us**

We welcome you to check out our website at [acww.org.uk](http://acww.org.uk) where you can find a plethora of more information about all of the topics covered in this presentation. DEMO WEBSITE

Please get in touch with Central Office by email at [office@acww.org.uk](mailto:office@acww.org.uk) if you have any questions or queries.

Feel free to follow us on Facebook too! We can be found by searching “Associated Country Women of the World” or at this link. SCREENSHARE FACEBOOK