

# THE CHALLENGE DAILY

Interviews, inspiration  
and everyday advice  
to help you 'Choose  
to Challenge'.

A publication by

SAVERA UK

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# WILL YOU CHOOSE TO CHALLENGE?

International Women's Day is a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. It is also a time to commit to making sure that all women's voices are heard. The campaign theme for International Women's Day 2021, #ChooseToChallenge, asks you to hold your hand up and speak out against gender bias and inequality.

When most people think of the word "activism", they think of street marches and large protests with placards. Although these are valuable ways of making a statement, everyday activism is just as effective in challenging an unequal world. It is everyone's responsibility to stand up for equality and help change the world.

There are many ways that you can #ChooseToChallenge:

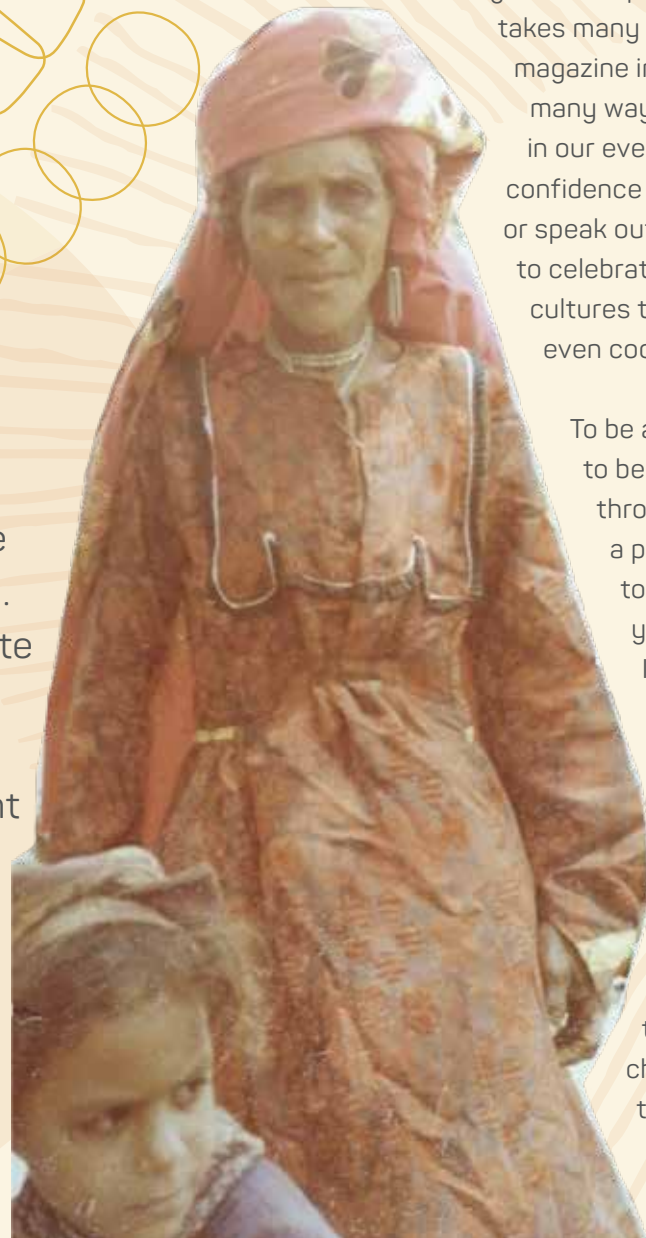
1. Commit to learning and understanding what is meant by gender equality
2. Recognise gender-based abuse and call it out
3. Share what you have learned with a friend
4. Support women's organisations and businesses

Lasting change comes from the many and not the few. Collectively, we can all choose to challenge.

# A LETTER FROM AFRAH



Each year we come together with our community to celebrate International Women's Day (IWD). The fact that we usually celebrate after IWD is no mistake. It's a conscious choice. You see, while IWD is always an important event and one we engage in each year, we see it not as a one-off, but a starting point.



This year's theme is 'choose to challenge' and if change is to be made, we must challenge threats to gender equality and human rights every single day.

There isn't just one way of challenging gender inequality and abuse. Activism takes many forms and that is what this magazine intends to highlight - the many ways we can 'choose to challenge' in our everyday lives, from having the confidence to share our own stories, or speak out against harmful practices, to celebrating our beautiful and diverse cultures through dance, art or even cookery.

To be an activist, you don't have to be a public figure or march through the streets with a placard. You can simply choose to challenge through your day-to-day actions. I grew up with my Grandmother in Yemen. She was a young widow who did not know how to read or write, with five children depending on her, but she was still able to challenge and navigate her male-dominated environment to ensure that she was not cheated out of the land/farms that belonged to her

and her children after her husband's death.

She never left her village, but she was a woman of great knowledge and many skills.

She was and still is my ultimate role model and inspiration. Just like my grandmother, I now choose to challenge, when I know that things are not right. I choose to challenge injustice and gender inequality wherever I encounter it.

Join with us, be inspired by others in our community, share your culture and make your own 'choose to challenge' statement, because together we can make a difference.

**Afrah Qassim**  
**Savera UK CEO & Founder**





## A CHAT WITH: **SUNETRA SARKER**

We caught up with Savera UK ambassador and star of Channel 4's Ackley Bridge, Sunetra Sarker, about activism and using our own platforms to speak up about beliefs and causes that matter to us.

### **Do you consider yourself to be an activist?**

"I never used to think I was an activist. I think I was quite scared of the word when I was younger, because it felt like it was quite aggressive, that you had to have quite an outspoken stance to be an activist. But as I've grown older, I've started to understand what activism actually is. Activism is just putting your hand up and speaking up for things you believe in. As you get older you start realising the things you do believe in, and the things you definitely don't believe in."

### **When did you become aware of the things you wanted to speak up for?**

"From about the age of 30 I started paying a lot more attention to the causes I wanted to support and the things I believed in. I'd look at both sides of the story, because if you don't look at what the people on the opposite side of a debate or belief are saying you can't really explain your views."

### **How do you use your platform as an actor to drive change?**

"I used to think my job was to learn the lines and just act as the person I was playing. Then, as I became more of a household name, I realised I had another job as well. Being on TV gave me a profile and with that, I had a chance to invite people who liked my work, to hear what I think about other things as well, things that they may not hear about anywhere else. Being known as an actor is a bit like having a loudspeaker so you can speak to the whole street at once, instead of knocking on every individual door."

“**Activism is just putting your hand up and speaking up for things you believe in.**”

You have been on TV since you were 15 years old, appearing on shows like Brookside, Casualty, No Angels and now Ackley Bridge. When did you first realise how powerful your voice and opinions could be?

"When I was doing Casualty, one episode had an FGM storyline. This was a big turning point for me, because I was invited to speak about the issue in places where I didn't normally get invited to speak, such as on Radio 4. I realised then that I had an extra voice that I could use to support ideas and beliefs that I thought people may need to see from another point of view. This in turn led me to being appointed as an ambassador for Savera UK, giving me even further opportunity to speak out against harmful practices."



# “There is still a fear of speaking out”

**Why do you think people still fear the idea of being an “activist” and how do we overcome this?**

“I think that in today’s climate there is still a real fear about calling people out. I feel like we hear so much about people that get shouted down for saying something that other people don’t agree with, that there is a fear of speaking out and standing out. I think we can overcome this by finding communities of like-minded people, groups that advocate for the things that you believe in. That way you can stand together and you’ll often find that’s an easier starting point.”

## **Sunetra’s top tips for everyday activism**

1. Go online and read articles/ watch videos about topics that concern and/or interest you - really understanding a topic will give you the confidence to speak up about it
2. Use hashtags to find people and groups with shared beliefs, who you can get involved with through engaging, volunteering or donating
3. Share articles and videos with your friends and use them to start conversations
4. Use social media to follow people who align with your beliefs and share their message by retweeting or reposting from your channels

## **EVERYDAY ACTIVISTS: COMMUNITY WOMEN**

Here in Merseyside, we are surrounded by many incredible women who are activists, choosing to challenge inequality and abuse. You can meet some of them here.



**Dee Abimbola,**  
**Development Manager,**  
**Rainbow 50+ Community**  
**Organisation**

“As a researcher and public speaker, my interests in challenging gender inequalities generally and within African culture in particular span more than three decades. Within my role as Development Manager, I promote the rights of women often overlooked within communities and cultures by: helping to develop a gender-equal and diversified organisation, raising awareness of unconscious bias, creating flexible working hours for women, actively encouraging aspirations of women from BAME backgrounds and positively encouraging women to tell their stories in a way that empowers them.”

[facebook.com/rainbow50somethings](https://facebook.com/rainbow50somethings)



**Ibbby Alasaly,**  
**Business Owner,**  
**Amani Services - Events**

“Many people are surprised when they see my all-female team arrive at venues as we carry big loads, build stages on-site and drive big vans. We have had people make comments about how it’s a man’s job to be lifting and how they are surprised girls can lift and move so much. I also think that being a Muslim Yemeni Woman working in this sector and actively speaking with men, has broken many barriers both in my community and out. It’s broken down cultural, gender and religious barriers. People see my business as real and me as a human being.”

[amaniservices.co.uk](https://amaniservices.co.uk)

## EVERYDAY ACTIVISTS: COMMUNITY WOMEN CONTINUED

**Geraldine Judge,  
Advice Advocacy  
& Service Support  
Team Leader,  
Irish Community Care (ICC)**



"ICC is a community organisation working with anyone who is Irish, Irish Traveller, of Irish Descent and Romani Gypsy. ICC engages its communities on the basis and principles of Asset Based Community Development and Engagement, working with people as advocates and facilitators, to have their voices heard. We support community members to be proactive and empowered within their community and address inequalities by setting up focus groups, service user forums and linking our communities to cultural events such as the Liverpool Irish Festival. We have an active volunteer base and are always looking for people to join."

[irishcc.net](http://irishcc.net)

**Aleasha Chaunte  
and Deborah Wintle-Escott,  
Co-Director, One September**



"We are a female led organisation rooted in our values which include equality, inspiration and joy. We challenge gender-based violence and abuse in our practices, speaking up and offering the floor to people to tell their own story in an atmosphere of dignity and mutual respect. No one is perfect so we consider this a continuous work rather than a standard we have already achieved. We choose to celebrate the joy and achievements of the women and female identifying people who have always been there, making a difference, but whose contributions were erased from history."

[oneseptember.co.uk](http://oneseptember.co.uk)

**Joanne Tremarco,  
Freelance educator,  
birth worker, artist and fool,  
FoolSize Theatre**



"I run weekly sessions to support 'mothers to be' in their birth preparation. I'm passionate about supporting women to know their rights and practise embodied consent to avoid unnecessary procedures or obstetric violence. Using arts and humour promotes healing and understanding. I use visual art and performance to promote female sexual pleasure and run theatre workshops that enable people to address the wounded feminine. I have worked for Savera UK Youth to help create performances and poetry to tackle harmful practices. Additionally, I created 'Clitletoe', an educational Christmas decoration, to raise awareness about, both, the clitoris and harmful sexual practices."

[foolsize theatre.com](http://foolsize theatre.com)



## EVERYDAY ACTIVISTS:

# SAVERA UK YOUTH

Savera UK Youth is a group of 11 – 25 year old activists who come together to speak out against harmful practices. They give a voice to the younger generation and empower, inspire and educate their peers, while gaining new skills.

Here two members of the Youth Advisory Board share what they #Choose to Challenge



Naomi

### What do you #ChooseToChallenge?

I am a strong believer in education, and with education comes clarity and understanding. Our duty as Savera UK Youth Advisory Board is to inform young adults, like ourselves, about gender inequality and abuse so they can assist us in eradicating these practices for future generations. People of all ages and backgrounds do not know the physical and psychological impact that harmful practices have on women and girls and so we use art, poetry, performance and social media to change attitudes and speak out.



Hannah

### What do you #ChooseToChallenge?

I joined the Savera UK Youth Advisory Board to make a difference. I wanted to be an activist for a cause I am passionate about and Savera UK gave me that platform. During lockdown, we launched our Instagram page (@SaveraUKYouth) to raise awareness about FGM, forced marriage, and 'honour' based abuse. On International Women's Day, we raised our hand with other activists to speak out about these practices. I have become more vocal about gender inequality and abuse, voicing to others about the abuse victims endure. I follow more news stories about these inequalities because I want to know more.

Follow Savera UK Youth on Instagram @SaveraUKYouth

## CHALLENGING HARMFUL PRACTICES: TANIA'S STORY

Ahead of her departure following four-and-a-half years working with Savera UK, Service Development Manager, **Tania Vera-Rigby** shares her experience of choosing to challenge harmful practices and supporting survivors and those at risk.

"We've come a long way since I joined Savera UK in December 2016. I have seen the service team grow from myself and my computer alone in the office, to a full-time team of eight.

"Savera UK has been instrumental in providing expert advice and guidance about harmful practices to professionals across Merseyside and the UK, and it provides direct practical and emotional support to anybody at risk of these practices and 'honour'-based abuse (HBA). I am so proud of how far we have come.

"One of the main challenges throughout my time at Savera UK is the continuous gap in knowledge with professionals around these risks, which is often due to high staff rotation within agencies but also can be down to an unconscious bias, so there is a constant need for our team to advise and lead on such cases.

"Working in a sector that not many people know about, we have helped so many survivors of HBA when they had nowhere else to go or when no one was listening. Often, it is left to Savera UK to provide our clients with the additional support they need.

"As a voluntary organisation, when we feel our clients' and our professional concerns/expertise are not taken seriously, it leaves our clients vulnerable and this can be frustrating. However, myself and the whole team - old and new - have remained at the forefront, fighting for our clients and I know Savera UK will continue to do so. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all staff, past and present for their dedication in supporting Savera UK's clients. It has been a pleasure to work with you and I will forever be proud of the work and impact we have had and the lives that we have saved."



# Q&A: MOVEMA

**Movema is an award-winning world dance company run by four women from diverse cultural backgrounds - Chinese, Malaysian, Caribbean and Irish/British. The dance company celebrates diversity through dance, providing safe spaces for different communities to come together, participation and learning projects and opportunities for professional and emerging dance artists.**

**We caught up with founding member, Maria Malone, to talk art and activism.**

**Q: Do you believe that dance – and art more generally – can be used as a form of protest and activism?**

**A:** “Yes, 100 percent. As dance is a visual artform that involves the body, it can be seen as inherently political and inextricably linked with representation and identity. It can also happen anywhere, breaking boundaries of space, occupying environments and changing them. There is a long history of artists using movement and dance to convey messages, their starting point is often their own bodies and the oppression they may be experiencing.

**Q: In what ways can dance be used as a form of protest?**

**A:** “Carnival can be seen as a radical act, occupying the streets and moving together. The coming together of people from different backgrounds and identities, using the body in a way that is not just for work or religious reasons can all be seen as subversive.

“There is also a quote that is attributed by some to Queen Victoria: ‘Beware of artists. They mix with all classes of society and are therefore most dangerous.’ Being an artist often means stepping in and out of different social circles, from performing to the rich and influential, to perhaps taking on menial jobs in hard times. This means the artist has a view on life that is unique and is therefore ideally placed to make work which reflects society from all angles.”

**Q: Can celebrating a culture through dance also be seen as activism?**

**A:** “We think so! It’s a way of allowing individuals to be seen, to embody and therefore come closer to other cultures, it’s a way of doing this with respect and generating a deeper understanding, which is what we need these days.”





# TAKING CONTROL OF YOUR STORY



We caught up with BBC Radio Merseyside presenter and founder and CEO of iWoman Academy, Ngunan Adamu, to discover how the Academy is helping women across the UK take ownership of their own stories and careers.

## **So tell us Ngunan, what is iWoman Academy and who is it for?**

"iWoman Academy is a 12-week course to help empower and upskill women using radio production techniques. It was established to help unemployed women in the region to develop their skills and give them the confidence to get into the media. This element was funded, but there will also soon be a paid option which will allow any woman to enroll on the course. The paid participants will enable us to self-fund even more places for unemployed women and those from deprived backgrounds, without being reliant on external funding."

## **What are the aims of the course?**

"We have worked with women from many different backgrounds, for example a Syrian refugee and a Ugandan immigrant. These are voices that are often not given a platform. What the course aims to highlight is the importance of allowing their voices and stories to be heard. We give participants the skills to be able to take control of their own stories and share them with confidence. This covers everything from identifying the story that you want to tell, to responding to questions from interviewers in such a way that you can keep the conversation focused on the story YOU want to tell - not the interviewer."

## **What practical skills do participants learn at iWoman Academy?**

"The course covers everything from finding a story, writing radio show scripts and interview techniques, to using studio equipment, blogging and vlogging and editing a radio show. Everything we do aims to build confidence and transferable skills that can be taken into any workplace."

## **What topics have previous participants covered?**

"Health is a global concern and often a focus. Fern Thompson, a recent participant, looked at Genophobia or the fear of sex or sexual intimacy, while another, Rachel Gnagniko, shared her personal journey with fibroids. Whatever topic participants choose to cover is one that truly matters to them."

To read participant stories or find out more about iWoman Academy visit [iwoman.co.uk](http://iwoman.co.uk)

# TAKE ACTION!

You can **#ChooseToChallenge** by supporting organisations like Savera UK.

Here are five ways you can get involved:

## Recognise and call out abuse

Educate yourself on the signs of 'honour'-based abuse and harmful practices and learn where to go to get help.

## Join Savera UK Youth

If you're aged 11 - 25, you can be part of a generation making change. Join our youth advisory board and help us, while gaining useful skills.

## Volunteer with us

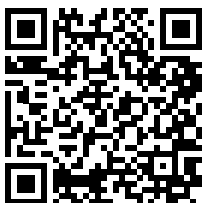
Share your time and skills with us. From helping us to host a coffee morning, to joining our advisory board, there are many ways to help.

## Join our campaign

Share your stance on harmful practices on social media using #ImSpeakingOut and tag in @SaveraUK.

## Donate or fundraise for us

Raise money through running, bake sales, or even get your business to back us. Every single penny goes towards providing life-saving services



For more information, visit:  
[saverauk.co.uk/what-can-you-do/get-involved/](https://saverauk.co.uk/what-can-you-do/get-involved/)

# INCREASE YOUR SELF-BELIEF



According to meditation and holistic coach, **Malminder Gill**, self-belief is key to gaining the confidence we need to assert our beliefs, opinions and decisions.

She said: "Our self-belief can fluctuate, usually because we have confidence in some areas of our lives, but not others. This may make your self-esteem worse because you start to see these individual aspects as more important than how amazing you are as a whole."

If you improve how you feel about yourself as a whole, you can increase your self-belief and confidence to assert your feelings and opinions. Here are her top tips.

## Be kind to yourself

Learn to recognise your critical inner voice and when you hear it, try to talk to it like you would talk to a friend. You can be honest, but you will be more kind, fair and reasonable.

## Accept compliments

When we feel bad about ourselves, we find it hard to hear and believe the good things people say about us. You may even go as far as to tell the other person why they are wrong. Instead of rejecting compliments, say a simple 'thank you'. In time, you will start listening to these positive comments and they will improve your self-belief.

## Stop using negative words

When we talk to ourselves, we often use negative words like 'should have', 'can't', 'need' and 'must'. For example, when you don't complete something you need to do or must do, you might feel like you have let yourself, or others, down. These words trigger feelings that stop you for getting what you want out of life, so stop using them in self-talk.

For more tips, visit Malminder's blog at [www.hypnosis-in-london.com](https://www.hypnosis-in-london.com)

A word from our sponsors

# HOW WE #CHOOSETOCHALLENGE

"Reducing domestic abuse is a key priority for the city and work is ongoing to increase safety and support for all our residents. Sadly, reports of domestic abuse have increased since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and the city council is committed to working with partners and agencies to try to help victims to access support services.

"We have given essential funding to agencies, which has enabled them to buy equipment so staff can work from home, and has also been invested in PPE and cleaning materials to ensure they are as COVID-safe as possible. The team has also focused on raising awareness of domestic abuse. This has included sending leaflets out to residents in food parcels, advertising local support agencies in the local media and on posting key messages on social media and websites. "The key message is - you are not alone. I urge anybody suffering

domestic abuse not to suffer in silence. Taking the first step is difficult, but local services are here to help, offering support and advice if you need it."

Angela Clarke  
Liverpool City Council's  
Supporting Victims  
and Vulnerable People  
Team Leader



For more information visit  
[victimcaremerseyside.org](https://victimcaremerseyside.org)

"International Women's Day is a very special day to me but this year it was particularly powerful as it's a call to action. Inequality is the biggest social injustice of our time and we all have a duty to #ChooseToChallenge. Our challenge involves everyone at MSB making a pledge so we can think about gender inequality across all departments and all teams. It is integral to our work, particularly with vulnerable clients, to ensure there

"The LCR Combined Authority is passionate about ensuring positive opportunities for women both within the organisation and across the Liverpool city region. The CA works closely with many organisations and we are looking at ways we can empower, mentor and support girls and women across the region. Crucially, we want to listen to what they are telling us is important to inform policies which may impact on them.

"Last year, we launched a staff led women's forum – LCR Women Together which brings together a network of women in our

is no such inequality. There is no place for gender bias in our community and all we need to continue to work together to make a better future for everyone."

Wendy Eves  
Senior Associate Solicitor at MSB  
Solicitors, Liverpool

For more information  
visit [msbsolicitors.co.uk](https://msbsolicitors.co.uk)



organisation. The vision is to ensure women feel represented and ready to maximise their potential within an empowering community. As the first woman director appointed at Merseytravel and now one of three women directors at the Combined Authority, I am absolutely dedicated to levelling up the opportunity in our organisation to create a more diverse workforce and championing gender equality in the workplace and the city region.

"The Combined Authority has made his commitment clear on the importance of tackling abuse against women and I fully support the view that we have to use every platform available to amplify the voices of women and deliver real change. As the Combined Authority for the Liverpool City Region we will do all we can to achieve this change."

Liz Dean  
Executive Director for Corporate  
Development & Delivery, Liverpool  
City Region Combined Authority

For more information visit  
[liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk](https://liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk)





## ÇOBAN KAVURMA (TURKISH SHEPHERD'S ROAST)

*"Shepherd's roast is usually made during Ramadan, so it is a traditional and culturally special dish. Turks slaughter animals every year during Ramadan and they distribute the meat of the sheep to the poor. Some people make shepherd's roast, while some people make kebab."*

### Ingredients

- 1 kg Lamb or Beef (with moderate fat), cut into 3cm x 3cm cubes
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 2 large onions, diced
- 2 large tomatoes, diced
- 3 green cayenne peppers, thinly sliced
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- 2 teaspoons red chilli pepper flakes

### Instructions

1. Take a wok or large frying pan and place it on a high heat.
2. Put the vegetable oil in the pan and then add the cubes of meat.
3. Sauté the meat on a high heat until it absorbs its own juices and browns.
4. Add the diced onions and sliced green cayenne pepper.
5. Sauté until the onions soften.
6. Add the diced tomatoes and sauté them until the tomatoes begin to soften.
7. Add the butter and continue to sauté the ingredients.
8. Add the salt, black pepper and red chilli pepper flakes and sauté for another 3 minutes. It is then ready to serve!

## SALTFISH, PLANTAIN AND WHITE RICE

*"The dish is special because it represents the sea and the beauty of St. Kitts. The dish reminds me of a welcoming atmosphere at the beach, with children playing in the sand, parents laughing and jamming to music. With each bite you can hear the waves of sea. Nothing but peace, harmony and happiness, this is what saltfish, plantain and white rice represents to me."*

### Ingredients

- 450g Saltfish
- 2 cups basmati rice
- 2 cups of water
- 4 cloves garlic, chopped
- 3 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 red bell pepper, diced
- ½ yellow bell pepper, diced
- ½ green bell pepper, diced
- 6 spring onions, finely chopped
- 1 small onion, chopped
- A pinch of black pepper
- 450g tomatoes, chopped
- 2 tablespoons butter
- A pinch of salt
- 2 tablespoons grated ginger
- 1 small onion grated
- ¼ teaspoon chilli pepper, finely chopped
- 2 plantains, sliced into small circles
- Vegetable oil for deep frying

### Instructions

1. Soak the saltfish overnight.
2. Soak the rice for 30 minutes.
3. Boil the fish in water until tender (about 20 minutes).
4. Bring the rice to the boil and then simmer for 10 - 15 minutes. Drain the excess water.
5. Heat the oil in a large pan. Add the garlic, peppers, spring onion and chopped onion. Add a pinch of black pepper. Cover and cook on low heat for 6 minutes, stirring occasionally.
6. Add the tomatoes and simmer over a medium heat for 2 - 3 minutes.
7. Add the saltfish, butter, a pinch of salt, the chilli pepper, grated ginger and grated onion. Cover and simmer over a low heat for 5 minutes. Then remove the fish and drain on paper towels.
8. Fry the plantain in deep oil for 2 - 4 minutes until the desired colour. Place the plantain on a paper towel to drain excess oil.
9. Remove paper towels, put the fish, vegetables, plantains and rice together on a plate and enjoy!



# WRITE YOUR OWN CHOOSE TO CHALLENGE STATEMENT

Feeling inspired, empowered and ready to join us in speaking out against gender inequality and abuse? Why not write your own 'choose to challenge' statement here?

You can share your statement with us by taking a photo and sharing it on social media.

Tag us **@SaveraUK**

Share with **#ChooseToChallenge**  
**#ImSpeakingOut**

MY NAME IS:

I CHOOSE TO CHALLENGE:

I WILL DO THIS BY:

**#ChooseToChallenge** **#ImSpeakingOut**



# THE CHALLENGE DAILY

Thank you to our kind sponsors:



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