



“I used to sit beside  
the door of my  
house and watch  
other children  
going to school.”  
Read Nazia’s story  
on page 4

A photograph of a man with short dark hair and a beard, wearing a bright blue button-down shirt. He is smiling and looking towards the right, where he is gently touching a green fruit on a tree branch. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with green foliage and a clear sky.

# Kin

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A VSO publication. Free to supporters.  
March 2023

# THE POWER OF YOUR GIFT

**Your donations mean everything to us at VSO – did you know you could make your gift go even further?**

The Gift Aid scheme allows charities to reclaim tax on donations made by UK taxpayers. This means that for every £1 you donate, VSO will receive an additional 25p – and it doesn't cost you a penny extra!



**Last year, VSO raised £585,000 in Gift Aid income alone**, meaning that our volunteers can reach more communities in the most vulnerable areas of the world. People like Rabina, who was supported by our ENGAGE project. People like Rabina, who was born with cerebral palsy and lives in a rural village in Nepal, where attending school was once impossible for girls like her. Thanks to efforts from a VSO community-based mentor, Rabina can now move around independently with a wheelchair. The mentor worked with Rabina's community to get her access to the education she deserves.

Have you ticked the box?

There are more communities that VSO is yet to reach, and you have the power to help us do so with your donation. **If you're a taxpayer, please tick the 'Yes' box for Gift Aid when donating – the smallest gesture can make the greatest difference.**



## "I'm so grateful to you"

When I think of all the challenges the world is up against, I keep asking myself:

Can our global community rise to the challenge of climate change and ensure we protect the most vulnerable from the loss and damage that is already happening?

I'm Clodagh, and I lead on VSO's resilience work helping communities prepare for and adapt to extreme weather patterns.

I believe that through volunteers, we can make the biggest change. Volunteers ensure our work is led by what the community needs – we're helping real people with their real problems.

Can we rise to the challenge of climate change? It's the VSO community of supporters like you that makes me think, yes, we can. It's heartening to know there are others who recognise that duty to be there for our fellow human.

Right now, VSO needs you. If you can, donating to VSO is the single best thing you can do, so we can continue supporting communities in their time of crisis.

Thank you,

*Clodagh Byrne*  
Resilience Lead Adviser at VSO

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Individuals in one unusual floating community are building their own water gardens.



©VSO/QAMAR GOREJA, ©VSO/SOPHEA CHHEUN

©VSO/SURAJ SHAKYA

# HELP VSO KEEP CHILDREN IN PAKISTAN SAFE

Right now, Pakistan is reeling from devastating floods which left a third of the country underwater. As the country grapples with the effects of a changing climate, it's children who are being left behind.

Currently, there are an estimated 22.8 million children in Pakistan unable to attend school. Many of these children are refugees whose families have fled to Pakistan to escape armed conflict in Afghanistan. However, climate change poses another threat: in the last few months, Pakistan has experienced some of its deadliest floods in years.

"Schools have been badly damaged,

and many people have been forced to leave their homes. The danger of new flooding remains high," says VSO Education Officer Mir Afzal, on the ground in Pakistan.

"When people experience this kind of devastation, they focus on immediate survival – finding shelter, accessing essential healthcare, and ensuring their families are fed. Girls' education becomes a secondary concern and is also often neglected by humanitarian response planning," says VSO's Country Director for Pakistan, Hashim Bilal. VSO partners, together with community volunteers, have opened two temporary learning centres in the wake of the floods which will serve as models to be adopted at government level.

One thing is becoming increasingly clear: education cannot wait. Schools are so important for children to be happy and healthy and to fulfil their potential. Schools offer structure and routine amidst the chaos.

Take 7-year-old Nazia, for example,

who lives in a rural region of Pakistan. All she wants is to go to school, but after contracting polio as a young child, walking became painful for her, and suddenly school became out of reach:

"I used to sit beside the door of my house in the morning and watch children going to school," says Nazia. "I wished to go to school and learn new things like others, but I was unable to walk to the school on my legs. It was too far away."

And, sadly, the children who struggle the most are the ones who already face barriers: children with disabilities, children living in poverty, girls and refugees.

Right now, VSO is covering school costs so children can re-enter school, and volunteers are campaigning on the importance of girls' education,

speaking with parents and local authorities. Volunteers are also helping adapt schools to meet the needs of children with disabilities. And, VSO has helped support the introduction of lessons on climate change, teaching children how to protect themselves during natural disasters.

Now, Nazia has been able to join a nearby VSO-run education centre, where she has proved herself to be a bright and capable student.

"I have made good friends and I play puzzles with them. I'm learning my alphabet and how to count," Nazia says with pride.

But there are still so many children out of school that need VSO's support. In the next three years, we want to help 40,000 refugee children, girls and children with disabilities into school. ✨

Words by Deborah Torr

## WE NEED YOU

We know there are some children like Nazia who still don't have safe access to a school.

As climate change, conflict and poverty continue to threaten the safety of children in Pakistan, will you help us reach them by donating today?

[Click here to learn more >](#)

◀ Nazia is now learning at a nearby VSO-run education centre.

▼ Flooding in Pakistan has left a third of the country underwater.



©VSO/QAMAR GOREJA, ©ADOBE STOCK/TRENTINNESS TRENTINNESS



# A LIFESAIVING GESTURE



JANET

Among Deaf communities in Kenya, there is very limited access to contraception and information on family planning. Few healthcare workers in Kenya are trained in sign language. The result? Unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions and risky deliveries. On one VSO project, we are making sure people with hearing impairments have access to the right information and care.

Janet, a gender-based violence coordinator, and her colleagues at the Ogongo Health Facility in Mbita have received training in Kenyan Sign Language.

Janet can now provide health information in sign language to deaf patients, like Mary, so they too can make informed choices about family planning and contraception.

## WANT TO LEARN MORE?

[Read more about the project by clicking here >](#)



MARY

©VSO/PAUL WAMBUGU

# £1 DONATION?

We'll make sure it reaches those who need it most.

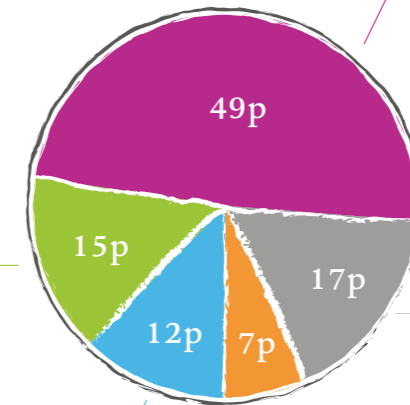
88p goes towards changing the lives of the poorest and most vulnerable.

### RESILIENT LIVELIHOODS

We are building food, job and income security for marginalised women, young people and people with disabilities.

### RAISING FUNDS

12p in every £1 goes towards raising the next £1.



### INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

We are supporting girls and early childhood education, helping with basic literacy and numeracy skills that lay the foundations for children to have a brighter future.

### HEALTH

We are improving access to quality and comprehensive health services and rights for all adolescents and youth.

### CORE APPROACHES

We are:

- Helping communities recover from and adapt to shocks and stresses like natural disasters.
- Addressing the imbalance that stems from discrimination
- Elevating the voices of individuals to hold decision makers to account.

These figures are based on our overall expenditure in 2021-2022. Read more here: [vsoint.org/annualreport](https://vsoint.org/annualreport)

## Ones to watch

Delve deeper into the issue of climate change with our documentary recommendations.



### SEAT AT THE TABLE

On the journey to Glasgow for COP26 in 2021, activist and filmmaker Jack Harries meets with young people who don't have a seat at the political table.

[Watch on YouTube >](#)



### A LIFE ON OUR PLANET

The planet may be in decline, but national treasure Sir David Attenborough puts forward his vision for a brighter future in this Netflix Original.

[Watch on Netflix >](#)



### I AM GRETA

Follows Greta Thunberg's journey from school striking in Sweden to her wind-powered journey across the Atlantic Ocean to speak at the UN Climate Action Summit and much more.

[Watch on BBC iPlayer >](#)



### THE BOY WHO HARNESSED THE WIND

A powerful film based on a true story. A 13-year-old boy in Malawi saves both his family and village from famine by building a windmill out of bicycle parts and scraps.

[Watch on YouTube >](#)

\*Top tip: Google search the titles of these films, and it will provide the most up-to-date place with where to watch them.

# 1

## CHASING WATERFALLS

One of the country's most fascinating spectacles is the majestic Victoria Falls. This thunderous waterfall is the planet's largest curtain of falling water at 108 metres, making it one of the Seven Wonders of the Natural World. Situated atop Victoria Falls is Devil's Pool, formed by thousands of years of erosion, where adventurous tourists dare to swim.

# 2

## A LINGUIST'S PARADISE

With over 70 languages and dialects, Zambia is one of the most linguistically diverse countries on the planet. Although the official language is English, there are seven local languages taught and used in communications: Bemba, Kaonde, Lozi, Lunda, Luvale, Chichewa and Tonga. Chichewa is the language adopted by the police and is also spoken in neighbouring Zimbabwe, Malawi and Mozambique.

## 5 THINGS ABOUT ZAMBIA

From cascading waterfalls to breathtaking scenery coupled with a diverse nation of many languages and cultural traditions, there's so much more to discover about Zambia than meets the eye.

# 3

## UNLOCKING THE POWER OF YOUTH

In Zambia, VSO has been equipping 500 young people with business-related skills and knowledge and networking opportunities so they can set up their own businesses. With youth unemployment up by 10% since 2012, this is an important step to helping young people enter the workforce.

# 4

## A COPPER MINING POWERHOUSE

Copper is the backbone of Zambia's economy, accounting for 75% of the country's total export earnings. The copper, which goes on to be used in electrical wiring and construction, is mined mostly from Zambia's mineral-rich Copperbelt Province in the north of Zambia, next to the border with the Democratic Republic of Congo.

# 5

## FAMILY PLANNING FOR ALL

Zambia has one of the world's fastest-growing populations and a teen pregnancy rate of 29%. VSO has so far supported over 15,000 young people to make informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive health and rights, using 'talking books' - devices which play important health messages in the local language. ✨

Words by Alice Walker.  
Illustration by Laura Cattaneo.



# BECAUSE OF YOU

From flooding in Nigeria to droughts in the Horn of Africa, 2022 saw some of the world's poorest communities bear the brunt of the climate crisis. However, dedicated volunteers are sharing vital knowledge and tools so that when disaster strikes, communities are better prepared - and it's all **because of you.**

## KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

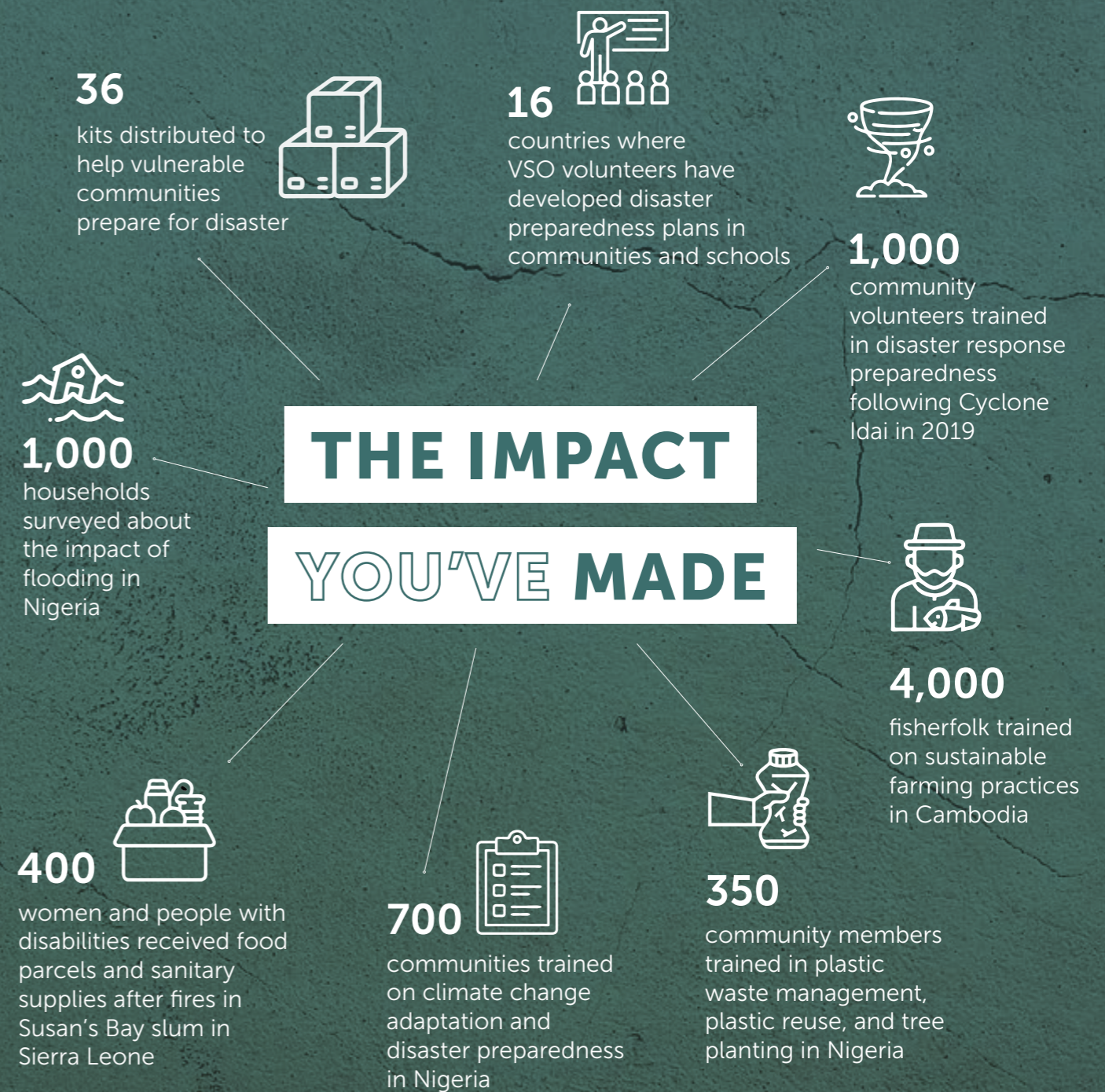
Volunteers have helped communities develop disaster preparedness plans. These plans help to decide what communities should do in case of disaster, including details of evacuation routes and potential hazards.

## ONE STEP AHEAD OF DISASTER

Community volunteers have been trained on the ground to respond to disaster, meaning that help can arrive much faster. Volunteers have implemented early warning systems that inform communities when extreme weather events are going to occur.

## A SAFER FUTURE

Knowledge held within communities is being used hand in hand with the most up-to-date technology to monitor and predict where disaster will strike next. This helps to plan future projects by identifying where the most in-need communities are.



VSO is reducing carbon emissions across the organisation by 66% over the next 5 years



©VSO/NYAN ZAY HTET



## WILL YOU HELP US BUILD A FAIR WORLD FOR EVERYONE?

Amid the devastation wrought by climate change, VSO volunteers continue to stand strong and support communities impacted by climate change. Will you help us?

This is Irena and Melen. They've both seen their farms depleted in the wake of severe droughts exacerbated by climate change. Through VSO training, they've introduced new farming methods, like using solar-powered pumps for irrigation. Before, the pair spent three hours per day collecting water. Now, they have time to build their farming businesses and spend time with their families.

From ingenious solutions to waste management, to climate-resilient farming methods like the ones used by Irena and Melen, these huge-scale problems require long-term solutions - not quick fixes.

Thanks to many of you who already support us with a gift in your Will, we can plan for the long-term and make sure that even in the most fragile contexts the

power of volunteering thrives.

If you want to help us build a fair world for everyone, please get in touch to find out more about leaving a gift in your Will. Let's stand shoulder to shoulder with the people who need it the most.

**Today. Tomorrow. Always.**

### FIND OUT MORE

[Click here to find out about leaving a gift in your Will >](#)

# CAMBODIA'S FLOATING

## GARDENS

A VSO project is assisting communities living on Cambodia's great lake, the Tonlé Sap, to weather many storms.

**C**hum Srey Nga, 50, looks around in amazement at her floating garden onboard the boat where she and her family live, on southeast Asia's largest freshwater lake. Already vegetables that she and many others have been taught to plant, feed their families with, and sell, such as Chinese cabbage, shallot lettuce, and bok choy, are sprouting up.

For nearly four decades, Chum and her family drifted by on the Tonlé Sap in Cambodia. Things were far from perfect for them in Kampong Luong commune in the country's Pursat province. But fishing put food on the table and Chum made a living from their small but unsteady house on the enormous lake, where many are forced to live permanently.

Gradually over the years, however, things shifted, with the community now facing challenges including overfishing, deforestation, dam construction and industrial and domestic sewage.

"We were rich in fish. It has changed a lot," says Chum, a mother of eight

and grandmother of three, who has lived in a huge floating village there since 1979. "Today, the Tonlé Sap lake has less fish; we cannot catch as much as before. But what should we do?"

Thanks to a floating garden, created via the Generating Resilient Environments and Promoting Socio-Economic Development of the East

**"Today, the Tonlé Sap lake has less fish; we cannot catch as much as before. But what should we do?"**

Tonlé Sap Lake (GREEN) project, a collaboration between VSO and partners, Chum now has enough food and income to keep her and her family secure. The four-year project, which began in March 2021, aims to help 4,500 marginalised people by equipping them with technical and vocational skills by taking up



sustainable farming. GREEN also aims to establish 50 initiatives through women and youth-led business incubations and develop three business plans through community-led ecotourism studies.

After hearing about GREEN, Chum, who lives nearly 100 miles outside Cambodia's capital Phnom Penh, registered for training. The initiative, which targets people in the Kampong Thom, Pursat, and Kampong Chhnang provinces of Cambodia, has three areas: water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), the green economy, and education.

Through the project, which involves 20 VSO volunteers, Chum and others have been given the knowledge, skills and tools to plant vegetables for floating gardens. They were taught how to build a floating raft using recyclable materials, such as plastic bottles, and to make chemical-free fertiliser, promoting more agroecological, sustainable farming.

"Before VSO intervened, my life was a struggle," says Chum. "I had no technical knowledge of how to grow vegetables. But now VSO has come in, my life is getting better. I have gained knowledge and skills in sustainable farming."

**Through the project, which involves 20 VSO volunteers, Chum and others have been given the knowledge, skills and tools to plant vegetables for floating gardens.**

After hearing about VSO and GREEN, Kem Rai, 38, who lives in a floating village with her mother and niece in Kampong Luong and works in fish paste processing, took part in workshops to hear about the floating gardens. Kem realised that if she learnt how to grow vegetables, she could supplement her income from her fish paste processing work. "VSO has guided

me to think of new initiatives of planting vegetables. Joining this project has helped me earn more than what I make from fish paste processing, and my family life is now better," says Kem.

"I do not worry so much when I have urgent needs." She has now reduced her expenses on food, as she gets this from

**"Climate change has caused us to lose our job raising fish, because of the bad pollution in the water."**

her garden, and can save more.

Kem's family has also suffered because of climate change. At one point the roof blew off their house, falling onto another, and they have been unable to raise fish.

"Climate change has caused us to lose our job raising fish, because of the bad pollution in the water. This not only affects me and my family, but other community members, as they were forced to stop keeping fish because of the unclean river," says Kem.

"This kind of climate change is affecting a lot of fishermen and women in my community, who in the past few years have reduced their fishing to half compared to before. Some families have no options but to stop."

Through GREEN, the community has also learnt to become more environmentally aware, through the project's workshops, with this information passed onto the community. "I raise awareness amongst my neighbours and tell them not to throw things in the water, just save it for recycling or keep it in the bin. Our community people have understood a lot and changed their behaviour," says Chum. "I am looking forward to receiving more support to expand my opportunities even more."

Thanks to the GREEN project, when there's trouble on the horizon for these vulnerable people on the Tonlé Sap, they now have ways of coping. But VSO needs to reach more people like Chum and Kem living on the lake today. *★ Amy Fallon*



©VSO/SOPHEA CHHEUN

**DONATE TODAY**

Many women like Kem and Chum in fishing communities in Cambodia are still struggling to survive.

**Donate today to help these fisherfolk survive and thrive on southeast Asia's largest freshwater lake.**

[Click here to learn more >](#)

# “ We can create the changemakers of tomorrow ”



Rwandan Youth Champion **Liome Kwihangana**, 28, represents VSO at major world events presenting his work in education and the need for young people’s involvement in conversations about the climate crisis.

**M**y mother passed away when I was 8, and I never knew my father, and that kind of life can be harsh. Growing up, I had nobody to push me, so I had to push myself.

But it gave me the desire to hustle and strive for more. I feel a moral duty to give back to those who need it most, which has been the inspiration behind my volunteering journey.

I became a national volunteer for VSO in 2018, helping teachers build their networks, connecting them with parents as well as government authorities, so that teachers can be involved in making decisions

at a higher level.

Alongside this role, I became a Youth Champion for VSO in 2022, where I’ve been speaking out at important events like the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in my home country of Rwanda, and COP27 in Egypt.

At these events, I have spoken out about the climate crisis, which is impacting us all in one way or another. I believe education is key when it comes to how to combat this because when we educate young people at an early age, they can become advocates for their own communities.

Attending these events has

allowed me to meet with groups of policymakers and governments. I can use my voice in these spaces to speak on behalf of those who can’t get a seat at the table, or even an invite to the party.

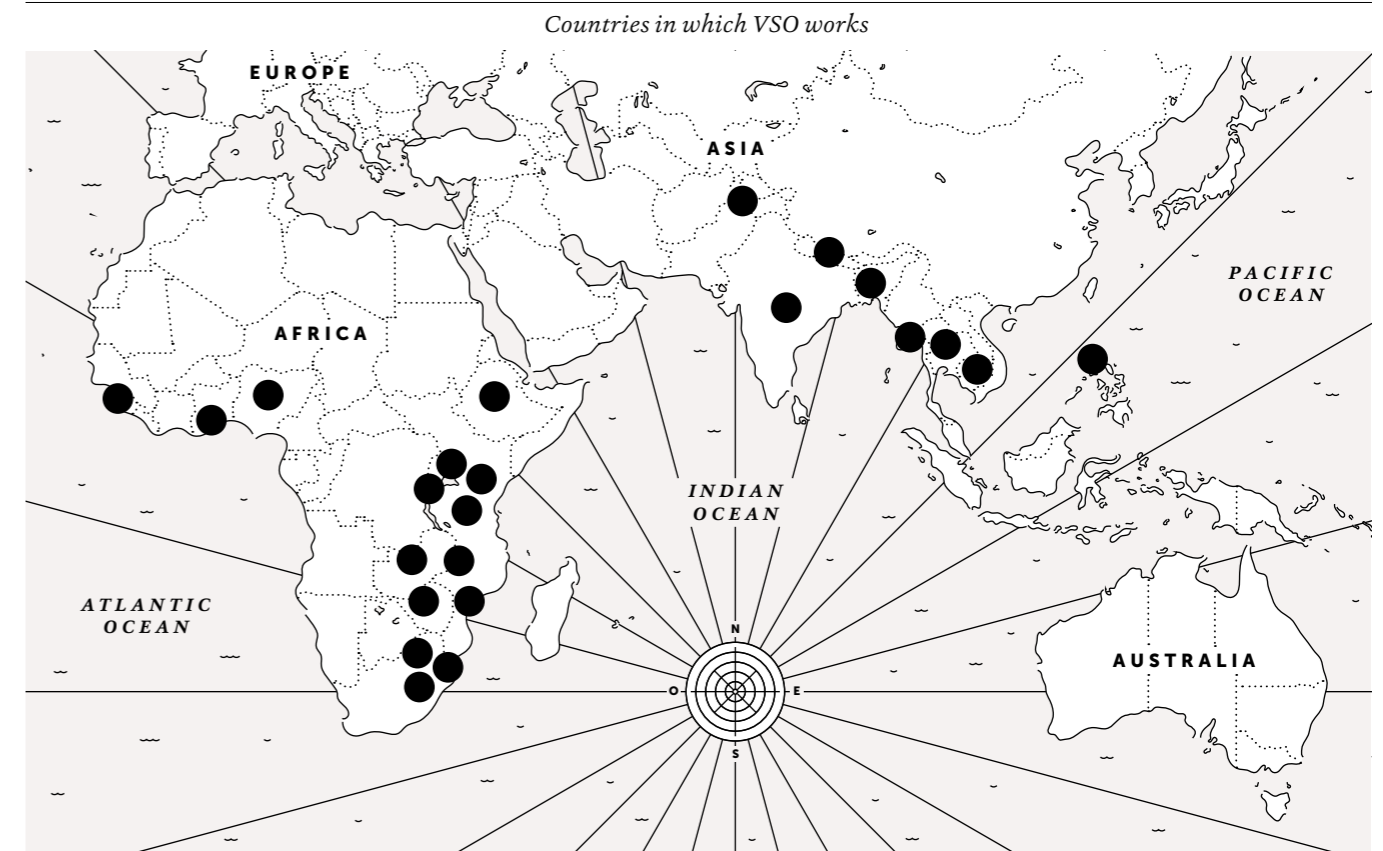
I know from volunteering that if we invest our time in other people, specifically young people, we can create the changemakers of tomorrow, helping the youth to create the future they deserve. I believe that if we introduce big changes at all levels of our society, our planet might just have a chance of survival. ✨

Interview by *Georgie White*

## DONATE NOW

Right now, VSO volunteers are working in countries across Africa and Asia to make a difference to the lives of the most marginalised and vulnerable. They need your support. Be part of the change we all want to see - donate today:

[Click here to donate to VSO >](#)



## FOUR WAYS TO HELP



### 1. KNOW SOMEONE WHO WOULD LOVE KIN?

Share a link to Kin magazine so your friends and family can read about VSO’s work too.

### 2. REMEMBER US IN YOUR WILL



You can write your own Will for free – just [visit our website](#).



### 3. DONATE TO VSO

Donations are the best way to ensure VSO’s work can last a lifetime. [Click here to donate to VSO](#).

### 4. SIGN UP TO OUR NEWSLETTER

Be the first to hear about events, updates from the field and ways you can get involved through our VSO newsletter. [Click here to sign up](#).



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“Due to funding cuts, we have had to say ‘no’ to working with communities when we want to say ‘yes’, and that is a cause of great pain.

“Please make whatever donation you can to help ensure we can continue to work in communities where we are deeply rooted, and where we have a full understanding of the challenges people are facing.”

- Philip Goodwin, VSO's Chief Executive

Please donate today and help us reach those who need it most:

[Click here to donate to VSO >](#)

