

# Our impact


Creating a fair world for everyone  
VSO Impact Report 2022/23




Since we started in 1958, we have worked in over 90 countries, deployed over **80,000** volunteers and supported almost **60 million** people.

### Impact in 2022/23

**10.9 million** people were reached nearly 7.4 million indirectly and over 3.5 million directly including:

 More than **3.2 million** through our education projects

 Almost **90,000** through our health projects

 Almost **200,000** through our resilient livelihoods programme

VSO worked with communities in 35 countries



Over **87,000** through our wider work on resilience, inclusion and social accountability.

To help people prepare for disaster, build peaceful communities, tackle genderbased violence, and create inclusive societies for people with disabilities.



**51%** of the people we worked with were women



**4%** of the people we worked with were people living with disability



VSO creates lasting change by unlocking the power of people. We bring together local, national and international volunteers to work alongside the world's most marginalised and vulnerable communities to build generational change.

Our vision  
**A fair world for everyone**

Our purpose  
**Creating lasting change through volunteering**

# Welcome, who we work with, our approach

**Our approach to development provides a sustainable, long-term solution to the complex global problems, that are affecting millions of vulnerable people around the world. This impact report provides an overview and some examples of what we have achieved during 2022/23. It highlights the amazing impact that we made in a wide range of contexts around the world thanks to supporters like you.**

## Doing development differently

Our volunteering for development approach focuses first on those who are left out by society – those living in extreme poverty, or with disability and illness, those who face discrimination and violence for their gender, sexuality or social status. These are not passive “beneficiaries” of aid. They are the “primary actors” at the heart of our work. It is from their viewpoint and actions

that we seek to define the issues, opportunities, and solutions that deliver sustainable and locally led change. VSO’s volunteering for development method provides opportunity for everybody to bring about lasting change.

## What do we mean by primary actors?

Primary actors are the marginalised people in communities that we work with whose needs we respond to in our programming. They are the ones engaging in projects, working with us to better understand the community’s needs, and working with volunteers to build a fairer world. Our responses are driven by demand from the poorest and most marginalised. We always work with local partners who can guide the most effective support.

## Why do we use that term?

‘Primary’, because they are principal contributors to VSO’s work and they shape the design and delivery of programmes. ‘Actors’, because they are active agents. VSO doesn’t do development to communities, we work alongside them.



National volunteer Aarati, community volunteer Rekha, and Female Health Community Volunteer Sarita, explaining about a contraceptive injection Depo-Provera, to local women in Gaur municipality, Nepal.

# Our volunteering for development method

Our volunteering for development method recognises the importance of relationships in forging a shared understanding and commitment and building collective action to lasting change. Through teams of community, national and international volunteers, it brings together a diversity of perspectives and experience to generate insights, innovate ideas and undertake actions that can address the underlying causes to complex problems facing our communities. It inspires and ignites the potential for active citizenship everywhere across the globe to step forward and drive the change that will create a fair world for everyone.

All our programmes address the root causes of marginalisation by focusing on three areas – what we call “core approaches” – that reliably tackle the structures, systems and conditions that make people vulnerable. These core approaches are fundamental to our volunteering for development method, ensuring the people we work with have the confidence and capacity to bring about change in their own lives.



Regina with her son outside her parents' home where she now lives and is raising her son with the assistance of her parents in Zambia. Regina returned to her parents' house after she learned that child marriage was illegal.

## VSO's three core approaches

### Social inclusion and gender

Millions of people face discrimination because of their gender, age, disability, cultural background, sexual orientation. VSO aims to dismantle the causes behind exclusion in all its forms.

### Resilience

Disasters, disease outbreaks and other shocks and stresses can have a devastating effect on communities. Those who are already vulnerable are most at risk. Our goal is to work with communities and societies to create stronger systems and capability wherever we identify vulnerability or fragility to shocks and stresses.

### Social accountability

Many people around the world are denied basic rights that are guaranteed in law, or may be subject to laws that are unfair or unjust. Corruption, fear, and unequal power dynamics stop people from speaking up and demanding a fairer, more just society. VSO works to support people exercising their voice, no matter who they are or where they are from. We also work alongside authorities responding to the needs of people they are there to serve.

# Our values

A photograph of a classroom where children are holding up their English Pupil Activity Books. The books are colorful and feature illustrations of children playing. The children are wearing school uniforms. The classroom has wooden desks and a teacher is visible in the background.

## Collaboration

- Empower poor and marginalised people to take charge of their own development
- Share skills and knowledge to create long lasting, sustainable change
- Build collaborative partnerships that promote innovation, growth and impact

## Inclusion

- Stand beside and advocate for those who have been denied choice and opportunity
- Promote diversity and equality throughout our work
- Encourage different, inquisitive perspectives

## Knowledge

- Lead volunteering for development, setting the standard for ourselves and others
- Use evidence and insight to guide our actions
- Recruit the right people and work where we have the greatest impact

## Integrity

- Commit to safeguarding and take a zero-tolerance approach to abuse and harm
- Treat others with respect, as equals
- Be open, transparent and accountable in everything we do

# Our work in Education

As part of our achievement, over **2.6m** learners in primary education had improved learning in literacy and numeracy by 22% and 11%, respectively.

**Our inclusive and resilient education work gives every child the opportunity to learn literacy and numeracy at the right level. This year, around the world, VSO has made significant contributions to improving learning outcomes and recovering the learning losses that children have experienced because of the COVID-19 pandemic. We have also been working to break down social barriers to inclusive education and to strengthen education systems.**

## Improved Learning Outcomes

In Nepal, the UK government funded, Enable a New Generation of Adolescent Girls with Education (ENGAGE) project helped over 5,600 of the most vulnerable out of school girls and over 26,000 other children across 203 schools to significantly improve their ability in maths and reading. Overall, children increased their early grade mathematics assessment scores by 45% and their early grade reading assessment scores by 160%.

The UK government funded, Building Learning Foundations (BLF) project in Rwanda worked with 1.3m boys and 1.3m girls, including almost 90,000 children with disabilities in primary education across 30 districts to improve their skills in English and mathematics. Post COVID-19, we have been supporting children across Rwanda to recover learning and make improvements in English and maths.

## Addressing Social and Systematic Barriers to Inclusive and Equitable Education

VSO volunteers working on the UK government funded, Education for Life Project in Kenya have worked with communities to increase community, family, and husbands' awareness of and support for education for girls and children with disabilities as well as support for continued learning for adolescent girls and youth. As a result, community groups have emerged to champion and advocate for girls' education. As a male champion in Isiolo, Kenya explains:

**“I ensured that girls at my village attend classes daily and I kept passing by their homestead to inform them about a class day and keeping time.”**

VSO also integrated sexual and reproductive health and rights awareness into the accelerated learning programme. This has given girls the confidence to make informed choices on use of contraception and are now more aware of negative practices that violate their rights.

## Education Systems and Policies Responsive to the Rights of Learners to Education

This year, VSO continued to invest in strengthening inclusive education systems. In Kenya, volunteers on the Education for Life project developed a strategic partnership with the Adult and Continuing Education, Technical Vocational Education Training and Special Needs Education teams in the Ministry of Education to advance policy and systems change.

The government used evidence from the improved learning amongst girls to develop Accelerated Education Guidelines. These strengthened the Kenyan education system to respond to the needs of girls and young people who have been out of school. School Management Committees and Parent Teacher Associations have reviewed and formulated school policies which they are using to bring girls back into education and to support them to transition to entrepreneurship, apprenticeship, and vocational training.

# Our work in Livelihoods

As part of our achievement, over **181,000** marginalised people, primarily **young people and women**, enhanced their Livelihoods capability.

**Over the last year, we have made a strategic shift in our livelihoods portfolio, deepening the focus on resilience by investing in 'green' skills and supporting a shift to agroecology or climate resilient farming. VSO agroecology volunteers and youth climate champions were integral to this change.**

## Inclusive Livelihoods

Youth engagement continues to be a central pillar of our livelihoods work. The FutureMakers project funded by the Standard Chartered Foundation has supported the livelihoods of young women and visually impaired young people to build their employability and entrepreneurship skills across three countries – Uganda, Tanzania, and Zambia. As Alfred Wamani, a visually impaired young man from Uganda explains:

**“In 2020, I became blind and in the same year my teaching career and marriage ended. I joined the Uganda National Association of the Blind-UNAB, while there I learnt about the FutureMakers project. I joined the saving scheme-Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLAs), which was mostly constituted of people with disabilities, and I became chairperson of the group. The money I have been borrowing from the group has sustained my small retail business and helped me provide basic needs for my family. My group was fortunate to receive business startup kits to start a saloon and laundry shop. The saloon is up and running with one visually impaired employee. We earn 300,000 shillings per month.”**

[Enhancing Youth Entrepreneurship and Employability video](#) with Elena and Susan’s testimony.

## Decent Employment

VSO has been at the forefront of thinking on future employment for young people in the countries where we work. As part of the Dutch government-funded Challenge Fund for Youth Employment (CFYE), VSO youth champions in Kenya have been leading research to understand the Future of Work and particularly the whole area of digitally enabled jobs.<sup>1</sup>

Technology has the potential to open new professions and career paths for young people around the world that did not exist in the past. It also can break down traditional barriers that prohibit access for young people, particularly women. Under the CFYE project, VSO youth champions have been involved in bringing a youth perspective into the design of Jobtech Learning Labs. These aim to understand, improve, and make more inclusive, digitally enabled jobs. VSO returned volunteers and experts participated in the development of the CFYE “Future of Economies” [Podcast Series](#).

<sup>1</sup> <https://fundforyouthemployment.nl/future-of-work-digitally-enabled-jobs/>

## Climate Resilient Farming

In Bangladesh, young community volunteers have been supporting farmers to improve their livelihoods by investing in climate resilient farming. VSO has focused particularly on women farmers, supporting financial inclusion through access to banking services. Our work has supported government agricultural extension officers to organize extension clinics at the field level every month where farmers can present their progress and problems directly to government officers. This makes interventions more sustainable as well as ensuring the state is accountable to farmers. Youth community volunteers are engaging young entrepreneurs to collect vegetables from farmer’s fields and send them on to sales centres with appropriate grading and quality, so there is zero waste of vegetables in the field and in the markets.

# Our work in Health

As part of our achievement, **75,000 young people** (10-24 age group) improved their knowledge and attitude in Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights.

**Our global health strategy aims to ensure that all adolescents and youth realise their rights to quality Sexual, Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child, and Adolescent (SRMNCA) health and well-being. This includes transforming structural barriers and negative social and harmful traditional norms and practices to ensure that adolescents and youth fully exercise their SRMNCA rights.**

In 2022/23, VSO contributed to reducing Gender-Based Violence (GBV) against women and girls through primary actors' collective action under the United Nations Women Trust Fund (UNTF) Speak it Loud project in Zimbabwe and through the United Nations Population Fund (UNPFA) Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response Project (GBVPR II) in Nepal.

VSO volunteers on the Speak it Loud project in Zimbabwe led training and awareness raising on prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse with primary actors as well as building the capacity of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and local partners in Mashonaland. As a result, local CSOs put in place tracking mechanisms to prevent and address GBV cases and primary actors started to speak out and act against GBV and Violence Against Women and Girls in their communities.

After training in social accountability, a group of women volunteers in Mashonaland Central came together to engage local authorities for improved access to health services for GBV survivors. Following a series of engagements and meetings, the local authority agreed to work together with the community to construct a clinic within their locality. As many GBV cases went unreported because of distance, in Mashonaland West, community

members influenced the police department to set up a police station in their community to improve reporting of and access to justice for GBV survivors. Efforts for further and sustained collective action against GBV are now increased through the additional support of the UK government funded, ACTIVE project.

In Nepal, VSO has been focusing on supporting women and men, including girls and boys, to prevent, report, and address GBV, including child marriage. VSO has trained community volunteers so that they can conduct reflection sessions on social norms with couples to build their awareness of GBV. They have also been trained in supporting family dialogues – or rupantaran in Nepali – which target adolescent girls and boys. Alongside this, the project has led interactions with community opinion leaders along with civil society representatives, to build awareness and to influence the Nepali government to institutionalise guidelines and protocols on GBV. One of the adolescent girls from Biratnagar shared that:

**“before the session, I was not able to speak freely with my parents regarding our choice and decision but now I ask for clothes, outing and other requirements according to my need.”**

VSO has engaged government officials in Nepal to highlight their obligations as duty bearers towards survivors of GBV, including how to utilise funds earmarked to support survivors. As a result, government officials have been proactive in seeking out GBV survivors instead of waiting for cases to be reported. Advocacy efforts have also helped adolescent girls over the age of 16 to become aware of their rights to access citizenship records which in turn provides them with access to education. This has helped girls to re-enrol into formal education and improve the long-term outlook for their lives.



# Building knowledge, delivering influence

**Building and using a body of knowledge from our programmes, engaging on policy, and advocating on key issues that will deliver a fairer world, are a crucial part of VSO's work. Our focus here is on advancing and supporting the delivery of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and ensuring that the rights of the poorest and most marginalised communities are secured. In 2022/23, we have directly worked in over 25 of the least developed and fragile countries in Africa, the Middle East and Asia-Pacific, but the impact of our wider engagement and leadership work reaches many more countries and many more places.**

This year, VSO's thought leadership on Volunteering for Development (VfD) and the insights we generated through our VfD method, were a significant part of our

global impact. We showcased VSO's knowledge and thought leadership in VfD, at a wide range of strategic international conferences. We made representations and submitted oral statements at the Commission on the [Status of Women conference 2023](#) (CSW67), and at the Conference of Parties on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change 2022 (CoP27).

We continued to use our robust research and evaluation practice to generate evidence and learning on VSO's unique Volunteering for Development (VfD) models and to promote the voice of primary actors and build their networks, bridging the gap between government or service providers and marginalised groups. For example, youth volunteers in Kenya, Malawi, Ethiopia, Rwanda, and Zimbabwe have been working with the World Health Organisation (WHO) to monitor the provision of local essential health services following the COVID-19 pandemic.

This year, VSO's programmes have engaged and contributed to the development of volunteer policies and frameworks in a range of countries including in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Nepal, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe. We are immensely proud of the work we are doing to promote the Global Volunteering Standard – ensuring that people around the world can volunteer safely and responsibly, making a positive impact to the communities where they are working. Over the last twelve months, we have worked with a wide range of governments including Cambodia, Thailand, and Malawi to help them adopt the standard, and VSO is working in the Philippines and Thailand to develop local versions of the standard. The African Union (AU) has used the Global Standard to develop the continental model volunteer policy. The policy is being used to support uptake of the standards in AU member states, which is expanding its influence beyond the countries where VSO has a presence on the ground such as Burundi.

Citizen and civil society monitoring of progress in delivering the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is also an important advocacy intervention supported by VSO. In Nepal, Cambodia, and Pakistan, VSO worked with local volunteers to share their experience of SDG implementation in their communities, through what is known as the Voluntary National Review process run by governments and reported back to the United Nations.

We have continued to strengthen youth volunteer networks for their effective engagement, active citizenship, and enhanced influence and impact. From leading birth registration right campaigns in fragile settings in Philippines, to challenging duty bearers to commit to youth-responsive health services in Tanzania, youth-led actions are driving our advocacy particularly to amplify voices of those who are most vulnerable.

# Looking forward



I am grateful to all those individuals, institutions and companies who have worked with us over the last year.

Together we have shown how we can work alongside the most vulnerable and most marginalised, to change our world for the better. This is what it means to be changemakers.

VSO will continue to focus on building the capacity of people in communities to be active citizens through volunteering supported by the roll-out of the Global Standard for Volunteering for Development and by building our strong relationships with multilateral institutions such as the African Union. Using our knowledge and evidence to build recognition of volunteering as a transformational contribution to the delivery of the Global Goals is key to our mission.

At the same time, our work will continue to support improvements in service delivery for the most vulnerable, in education, health and livelihoods. We know that there are strong links between each of these

sectors and that creating sustainable change requires us to bring all three together in our programming.

In education, we have built a reputation for innovation and use of information technology to extend the reach and quality of education provision. We are looking to expand these programmes but with a particular focus on ensuring that there is community support for education particularly for girls and those children with disabilities, and that the school environment is conducive to learning.

In livelihoods, the issues of climate change and decent employment for young people are at the forefront of our minds. We will be focusing on supporting locally led climate adaptation and sustainable agriculture practice and in working with partners around the world to support young people in finding decent employment opportunities.

In health, we know that strengthening the capacity of community health volunteers and peer educators in raising awareness of and speaking out against harmful traditional practices and social norms, is essential. Our

work will focus on ensuring that adolescents and youth, no matter the marginalisation or vulnerability they are facing, can exercise their rights to quality sexual reproductive health services.

We will continue to grow our strategic partnerships because we know that delivering our mission will not be possible without close collaboration. Partnerships such as the ones we have with the Pan African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA) to mobilise African voices and action on climate justice and with Randstad on developing innovative approaches to decent employment, are essential and just two examples of how we can deliver at scale.

We can be proud of what we have achieved with your support. But there is so much more to do. With your help, we can be confident about fulfilling our plans for the future to create a fair world for everyone.



**Philip Goodwin**, Chief Executive Officer



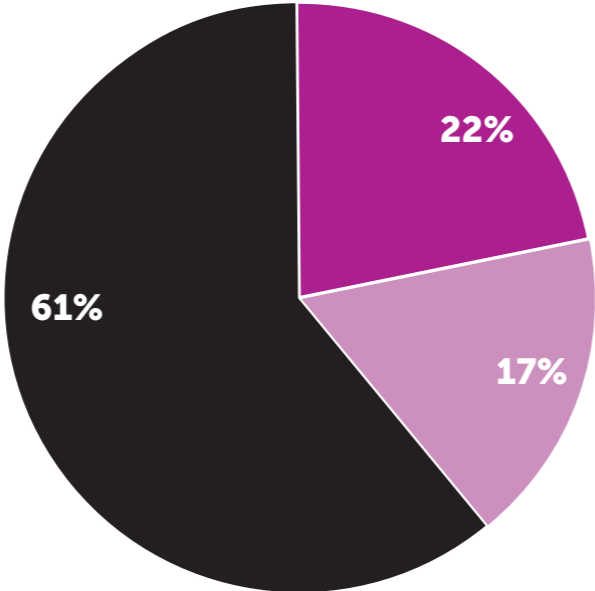
Pascoa, a community supporting teacher and Amelia, a primary actor. The EAGLE project aims to empower adolescent girls aged 15-18 years who dropped out of school in Mozambique.

# Where our money comes from

In 2022/23, VSO's total income was £40.4 million. The money came from generous individuals, trusts, corporates and institutions.

## Where our income came from 2022/23

- Institutional Grants: 61%
- FCDO ACTIVE grant: 22%
- Other donations: 17%

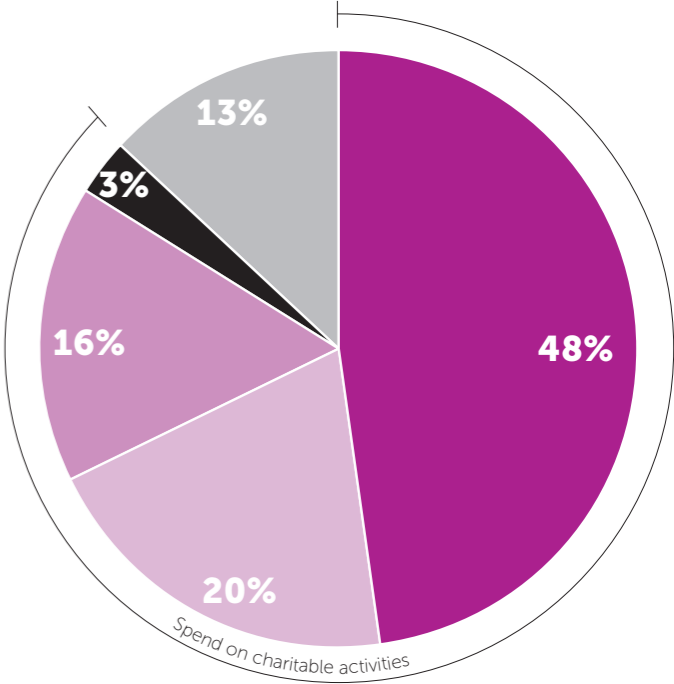


**TOTAL INCOME FOR THE YEAR £40.4m**

## How the money was spent 2022/23

- Inclusive Education: 48%
- Resilient Livelihoods: 20%
- Health: 16%
- Core Approaches: 3%
- Raising funds: 13%

**TOTAL EXPENDITURE FOR THE YEAR £39.2m**



# Thank you

Our work wouldn't be possible without the dedication and support of thousands of people, partners and organisations. From the volunteers who share their time and skills in our programmes around the world, to the partners who work with us on programme development, delivery, research and fundraising. From the staff and supporters who work tirelessly on our behalf, to the people and organisations who donate the vital funds needed to support our work – and all those who generously choose to leave a gift in their Will. The change is being felt by over a million people around the world, right now. Together, we're working towards a fair world for everyone. Thank you. Here are just some of the individuals and organisations who made a vital contribution to our work in 2022/23.

African Union • Austrian Development Agency • Avert • British Council • Civil Society and Indigenous People's Mechanism of the Committee on World Food Security • Education Cannot Wait Consortium • Education Development Trust • European Commission • ERIKS • Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office • Global Affairs Canada • Global Campaign for Education • Global Partnership for Education • GSRD Foundation • Hempel Foundation • IKEA Foundation • Imagine Worldwide • Institute of Development Studies • International Civil Society Centre • International Forum for Volunteering in Development • JBJ Foundation • KfW • Lego Foundation • London School of Economics • Mastercard Foundation • MESH Guides (Education Future Collaboration) • Ministry of Foreign Affairs of The Netherlands • NHS Lewisham and Greenwich Trust • Nyagatare Hospital in Rwanda • Onebillion • Palladium • Pan African Climate Justice Alliance • Population Services Kenya • Randstad • Robert Carr • Civil Society Networks Fund • Royal Norwegian Embassy • Southern Africa Network of Prisons • Standard Chartered Foundation • Tackle Africa • UNESCO • UNFPA • UNICEF • UNGEI • UNOCHA • UN Trust Fund • UNV • UNWOMEN • University of Northumbria • University of Nottingham • USAID • Weeshuis der Doopsgezinden • Wees een Kans • Wemos • WHO



Global Affairs  
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The LEGO Foundation



**If you would like to know more about VSO's work  
worldwide, visit [www.vsointernational.org](http://www.vsointernational.org)**

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