

Back the next generation of volunteers...

Our world doesn't work for everyone. For many, it's unfair, unjust, and broken. And for 65 years that's lit a flame in VSO volunteers, who have worked with communities to achieve lasting change.

By remembering VSO in your Will, you'll back the next generation of volunteers to tackle some of the world's toughest problems and make a meaningful difference to people's lives.

From building peace, to helping communities adapt to the climate emergency, the goal is to create a fair, just and joyful world for everyone.



Please get in touch with Heidi and Rosie, our legacy team, to find out more about leaving a gift for the next generation.

You can email us at legacies@vsoint.org

Grace and her five-year-old daughter, Maria*, are planting a mangrove. This is one way in which their community in the Philippines is protecting itself from typhoons and other natural disasters, thanks to VSO supporters.

*Name has been changed to protect her identity.

Globally, conflicts are growing more common. That is why building peace is increasingly at the heart of VSO's work.

It's my pleasure to welcome you to Kin, which features VSO's work to build strong communities and lasting peace. I'm Anne and I volunteered for VSO in conflict-affected Myanmar from 2019 to 2020 before joining the team to lead on this critically important area.

Right now, you'll be aware that conflict is destroying lives around the world, including in Ukraine, Palestine and Sudan. The roots of conflict are complex and varied. They include discrimination, inequality, poverty, access to land and climate change. The seeds of conflict are sown when one group of people is pitted against another.

People need to actively work for peace, and VSO volunteers are playing a key role in bringing communities together. On pages 4-7, you can learn about the challenges facing Guyatu* and Galgalo's community in Kenya. Families are regularly forced to flee when a cross-border dispute spills over, but as you'll discover, people there no longer feel powerless.

We are committed to leaving no one behind. So, please, if you can, keep supporting people like Guyatu and Galgalo, who are working to build peace, and safer, more secure lives.

Thank you.



Anne Harrop Lead Advisor Social Cohesion

Contents

O4 Peace matters

KENYA

Building peace and safer, more secure lives



O8 Building peace at a time of increasing conflict

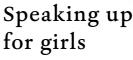
WORLDWIDE

10 Transforming children's education

MALAWI

12
Five things
THE PHILIPPINES

15



UK

16 Raj and Peter write back



18 My journey



KENYA

Ibrahim has become a peace-builder



Peace is the foundation stone on which safe, secure lives are built. But, right now, 28-year-old Galgalo and his family are in danger even in their own home. "There is conflict here," Galgalo explains...

t is a dry, hot day near the Kenyan border with Ethiopia. Galgalo, his wife, Guyatu*, and their four-year-old daughter, Chaltu* are standing in their house. Look up and you can see the sky. That's because the roof blew away and the couple don't have the means to repair it.

EXTREME WEATHER IS NOW THE NORM

Galgalo's community is caught in a cycle of longer, harsher droughts followed by floods and high winds. The weather in this region is becoming more extreme, bringing a new threat. There's growing competition for water, land and other limited resources, and the result is conflict.



LIFE IS GETTING HARDER

Galgalo is a farmer. During the last drought, all of his livestock and crops died. Hunger is increasingly a part of the family's lives. Often, they have only one meal a day of *githeri*, a mix of maize and beans.

Guyatu, like many women in the community, takes on the job of collecting water. She walks to a dam 10 kilometres away, twice a day, taking little Chaltu with her. It's a gruelling task that takes up to four hours of their day. "It's far," Guyatu explains. "I spend most of my time going to fetch water." All this to collect water which isn't even safe to drink because animals use it.

CLIMATE CHANGE IS FUELLING CONFLICT

Life is getting harder for families here, and Galgalo has seen tensions rise. In this area, many people keep cattle, and drought has forced herders to travel further to find water, food and grazing for their animals. Often, this takes them into land which people are cultivating, and two ways of life clash.



Galgalo, Guyatu and Chaltu in their home, which has no roof.



There have been reports of cattle-raiding. But Galgalo is most fearful when armed groups from the conflict in Ethiopia spill over the border, bringing violence with them. Galgalo and Guyatu are desperate to keep Chaltu safe. At a moment's notice, they are often forced to run from their home, and try to escape on roads that are impassable in extreme weather.

"I have had to flee my house five times in the last year. I fear for my family."

VSO volunteers are working with Galgalo and other farmers to adapt

to climate change, but conflict could destroy their progress. That is why building peace is at the heart of our work here, and in a growing number of communities.

PEOPLE NEED PEACE TO BUILD SAFE, SECURE LIVES

People need peace, safety and security, but they don't just happen. People need to work for them. With your support, VSO volunteers are bringing Galgalo's community together to discuss the problems they share. Conflict. Climate change. Having no voice and feeling powerless. As they have discovered, there are active steps they can take together.



THE CAUSES OF CONFLICT



A wider conflict spreads

In Ethiopia, the government is fighting a local militia in a conflict that spills over the border, with armed groups crossing over into Kenya.



The impact of climate change

The area is caught in a destructive cycle of drought, flooding and strong winds, which is destroying crops, killing livestock and forcing people from their homes.

Climate change has fuelled increased competition for land, food and water, and sown the seeds for another conflict.



Local clashes

Farming families have had to move further in search of grazing land, sometimes into land that other communities inhabit, causing different ways of life to clash.

With few prospects, some young people have been drawn into smuggling, human trafficking and other forms of crime.

Cattle-raiders, stealing people's precious livestock, have increased local tensions.



No voice

Communities, frequently forced to flee, do not feel heard by local and national government.

- ◀◀Galgalo is a farmer, living close to the Kenya/Ethiopia border.
- ▲ Guyatu and Chaltu on the twice-daily walk to collect water.
- Galgalo and Chaltu hold hands.
- *Names changed to protect their identities.

FINDING THEIR VOICES

People often feel powerless when conflict is being waged around them. As a woman, Guyatu understands that she is at greater risk of violence and asked that we don't show her face or her daughter's in photos. Yet women have had little say in her community. "Women aren't involved. We need to be," she says.

Rahma, a mother with two children, shared her frustrations. Rahma and Guyatu have now both seen that, if you want peace, you have to build it.

BUILDING PEACE

"I grew up in a family of two conflicting tribes," Rahma explains. "My experience of conflict was being forced to run from Kenya to Ethiopia, and not being able to go to school."

The violence continued for years. "There was no ownership in finding or building peace." But that changed when VSO started working with the community. For Rahma, there was finally a chance to play her part.

"I wanted to help my community, but I didn't know how," she says, "VSO's training has guided me through my journey."

As a VSO volunteer, Rahma trains women and

young people like Galgalo and Guyutu on their rights, and the importance of peace. "For peace to prevail in society, we need to work on issues including child marriage, female genital mutilation, education and poverty."

SPEAKING OUT TO ACHIEVE CHANGE

With your support, VSO is working with 21 peace committees, set up to bring communities together. Through meeting and talking, people have seen that many of their problems are shared. Understanding has grown and friendships have formed between individuals who might otherwise be adversaries.

The committees act as far more than a bridge between communities. They've also opened a dialogue between local and national government and people who previously felt voiceless.

ADAPTING TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Galgalo is a member of a peace committee. He's also involved in other activities to help the community to adapt to climate change, including goat farming and hay-making. VSO



volunteers trained Galgalo and other farmers in the practice of cutting grass after the rains and storing it as hay. With your help, they're now equipped with sickles to cut the grass, and use the hay they produce to feed their growing herds of goats through droughts. Excess hay is sold, providing muchneeded income, so there's hope that Galgalo and Guyatu will have the funds to repair their roof.

The next step is installing water tanks, which will be used by the whole community, rather than individual families. For Guyatu and Chaltu, it means an end to the long journey to collect water.

STEP-BY-STEP THE COMMUNITY IS CHANGING

On International Day of Peace, in September last year, Rahma looked around with a sense of pride. "On this day, we did tree planting."

This isn't only an important initiative to combat climate change. It also represents a collective attempt to build a future free from conflict, and as the roots grow stronger and the branches extend their reach, so will the hope of lasting peace. **

STRENGTHENING LIVELIHOODS AND COMMUNITIES

With your support, Galgalo is one of many local people involved in community activities to build safer, more secure lives.



Hay-making, goat farming and droughtresistant crops:

With VSO's support, families are adapting to the changing climate, so they can continue to grow crops and keep livestock.



4 Water storage: VSO is installing 10,000-litre water tanks so people can access clean water. The tanks serve the whole village, not just individual families, helping to promote social cohesion through shared resources.



Amore power: Local people have formed 21 peace committees and 21 disaster risk reduction committees. These bring people together to take positive action to protect peace and mitigate climate risk. But the committees also speak on behalf of the community to local and national government.

◀◀VSO volunteer, Rahma, has delivered peacebuilding training to community members. Photos: ©VSO/Obscuramedia

HOW YOU CAN HELP FAMILIES LIKE GALGALO'S BUILD SAFER, MORE SECURE LIVES TODAY

Conflict breaks out, but peace doesn't. It takes a great deal of work to secure it. With your support, VSO volunteers can bring people together, and enable them to take active roles in building lasting peace, and safer, more secure lives.

Click here to make a special gift today, or you can visit <u>vsoint.org/kin</u>



BUILDING PEACE AROUND THE WORLD

Around the world, conflict is devastating people's lives. Children can't go to school and livelihoods are being destroyed. But you are helping to bring communities together to build stronger, more cohesive societies and lasting peace.

NIGERIA

THE GOAL: LASTING PEACE

A decade of conflict in northwest Nigeria has cost thousands of lives, divided communities, and forced many people to flee. As peace returns to the region, you've helped bring **800 people** together on the football field. Football has helped heal the scars of conflict, and build a sense of unity among those previously on different sides.

UGANDA

A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR CHILDREN

Food shortages in the West-Nile region of Uganda are increasing tensions between the local community and refugees fleeing South Sudan. You are helping to bring **11,000 community members** from both groups together to discuss their problems and agree actions. Children now have the chance to attend **11 learning centres**, and access a quality education together.

BANGLADESH EMPOWERING YOUNG PEOPLE In Cox's Bazar, tensions have risen between the local community and Rohingya refugees. With your support, 18 new youth clubs have been opened to enable young people to gather together and share their experiences. Divisions between groups melt away as they discover common ground and work together to improve their lives.

MYANMAR

SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN LIVING THROUGH CONFLICT

Conflict in Myanmar is having a huge impact on children's lives. After the military coup in 2021, **7.8 million children** dropped out of school and the danger is they won't ever return. But with your support, children are coming into informal spaces to learn, play and have fun. Over **33,000 children, educators, parents and community members** are working with VSO to ensure children are safe and don't miss their chance of an education.

THE PHILIPPINES

PATHS TO PEACE AND STABILITY

Peace in Mindanao, one of the Philippines' most southerly islands, is fragile after a conflict going back six decades. With your support, 2,000 ex-combatants are finding a new role. Along with their families, they have helped build two eco-sanctuaries. They're now developing new livelihoods from sustainable tourism, and inspiring others to join the path to peace.

GROWING FRIENDSHIPS, NOT CONFLICTS

Climate change is increasing conflict on the Kenyan/Ethiopian border. With your support, VSO volunteers have been trained to bring people together, mediate, and promote peace. There are now **21 peace committees**, with members from different tribes and groups. More than **1,600 people** have been involved in meetings to air and solve problems, and we've seen friendships, not conflict, grow.

A new way of Learning in Malawi

Ten-year-old Thoko* says goodbye to his parents and sets off on the four-kilometre walk to school. He's looking forward to learning, and his parents are thrilled. Thoko used to stay at home all day, missing out on his education, but not any more.

There are 200 children in Thoko's class. They sit on the bare, concrete floor because there are no desks or chairs. Peter, the teacher, does his best to teach but, in these conditions, it's hard for the children to focus, let alone learn.

THOKO WAS STRUGGLING AT SCHOOL

With so many children in the class, Thoko struggled to hear and there was no chance of any individual support. However, since VSO built a learning centre at his school, Thoko and his classmates have enjoyed intensive learning sessions using educational solarpowered tablets.

Thoko now loves school and his parents are proud of his progress. His mother, Miriam, says "Before the tablets came, Thoko wasn't able to read or write his name. But now he can."



A BETTER FUTURE FOR THOKO

Children in Malawi have to pass an end-ofyear exam to move up to the next class, but many can't reach the required level in their overcrowded, under-resourced schools. They stay in the same class year after year, often dropping out when they can't progress.

"The tablets have helped me and my friends learn to read and write." Thoko

Thanks to the support Thoko's received, he passed the end of year exam, and that means he's gone up to the next class. He's now set his sights on becoming a farm manager.

CHANGING LIVES

Thoko is one of 217,379 children who had benefited from using an educational solar-powered tablet by the end of 2023. With your support, the number keeps growing.

The children's progress has been measured, and the results are so impressive that the Malawian government is partnering with VSO to work towards having educational tablets in every state primary school by 2029. \star

HOW YOU'VE HELPED IN MALAWI



3,733 School teachers trained

to use educational tablets

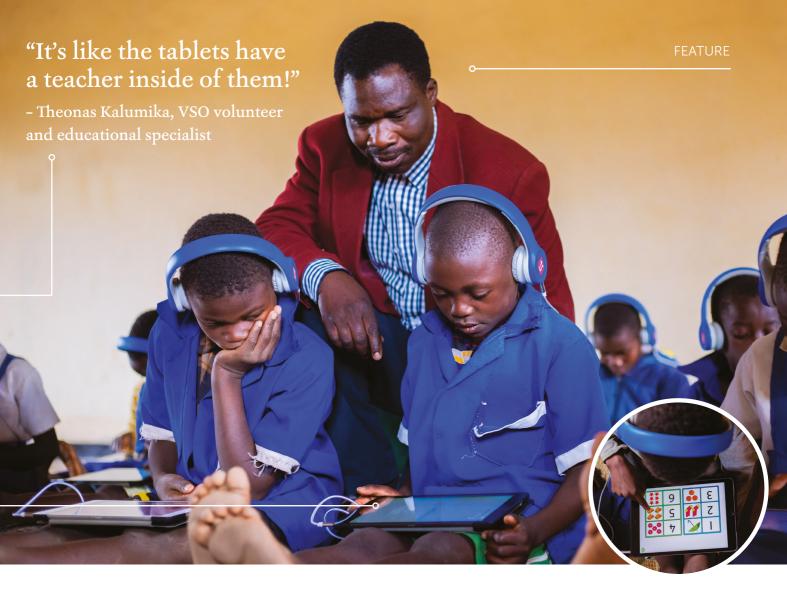
Solar-powered educational tablets provided



Students reached with the tablets



Reading skills increased by 10% and numeracy skills increased by 15% in three years





▲VSO volunteer Theonas works across 17 schools helping children use educational tablets. Here, he's giving Thoko (right) a helping hand.

◀ There are more than 200 children in Thoko's class.

Photos: ©VSO/Halifax Trading Malawi

*Name changed to protect his identity.

FIND OUT MORE

Click here to read more about how you're helping to unlock children's talents in Malawi. You can also visit <u>vsoint.org/kin-malawi</u>

You'll hear from Mphatso, one of Thoko's classmates, who has also learned to read, write and count with an educational tablet in his hands and a VSO volunteer like Theonas by his side.

1

MORE THAN 7,500 ISLANDS

Located in the Pacific Ocean near the equator, the Philippines is the world's second largest archipelago. Around 80 million people live across the islands, which fall into three major groups: Luzon in the north, Visayas in the middle, and Mindanao in the south.

With your support, VSO is working in Mindanao, where people have lived through years of conflict.

2

UNITY

More than three quarters of the population of the Philippines is Christian. Muslims make up the largest religious minority and live all across the Philippines. However, the island of Mindanao is 90% Muslim.

After six decades of conflict, you are helping to build lasting peace on Mindanao. VSO volunteers are delivering peacebuilding workshops that bring together the whole community and create a sense of unity.

5 THINGS ABOUT THE PHILIPPINES...

...including how you're helping people protect fragile ecosystems from extreme weather and rising sea levels. VSO's work in the Philippines goes back to 1964 and continues today with your dedicated support.



3

EXTREME WEATHER

People in the Philippines face as many as 20 increasingly powerful tropical storms a year, which damage and destroy homes, crops and livelihoods. With your help, local communities have planted mangroves. As well as protecting people from rising tides and typhoons, mangroves provide a nursery for fish, which fisherfolk can harvest and sell.

Click to watch a video on a climate-fighting hero vsoint.org/mangroves

4

CORAL REEF

The Philippines is located in the Coral Triangle, which hosts a dazzling array of marine life. Nearly 600 different species of reefbuilding corals can be found here. However, these precious ocean habitats are at risk from over-fishing, pollution and climate change.

Thanks to your support, there is hope. VSO has built three marine sanctuaries in Mindanao. Local communities monitor the reef and guard against damaging practices like using explosives to catch fish.

5

GROWING RICE

The Philippines is the 8thlargest rice producer in the world. The rice industry is a major employer and rice is far more than a staple food, eaten at all meals. It's embedded in culture and celebrated at local festivals.

With your support, rice is also bringing stability to fishing communities whose livelihoods are increasingly uncertain. In Mindanao, women group together to buy rice to feed their families and also to trade, sharing the profits among community members.

Click here to read more vsoint.org/rice

Over 15 hectares

of mangroves have been planted, protecting more than 100,000 fisherfolk

Remembering Susan, and her passion for education

Michael has found a wonderful way to pay tribute to his wife, Susan, and help transform the lives of children in Sierra Leone.

etermined, intelligent, thoughtful, and modest. Family-orientated. A deep thinker, but also a doer. An amazing host, who brought people together through a book club and other social events.

This is the loving picture Michael paints of his wife of close to four decades, Susan.

Michael lost his first wife to cancer in 1982. Susan and he met three years later, in 1985 after being introduced to each other by a mutual friend who had volunteered and worked in Ghana with Michael in 1965.

'Adventurous' isn't one of the words Michael uses to describe himself. Yet, long before the internet and with little opportunity to keep in contact with home, he travelled to Ghana to teach English and African History as a VSO volunteer. He remembers the warm, welcoming people, the spicy food, and even witnessing a military coup!

Susan was also a VSO volunteer, teaching English in Sierra Leone from 1968 to 1969. Michael says that she kept in touch with many of the girls at the secondary school where she taught for years afterwards.

After volunteering, Michael and Susan built successful careers back home in their chosen fields. Michael specialised in Law, while Susan continued teaching, later becoming a headteacher. In retirement, Susan studied for an MA and PHD in local history.

When Susan died in 2022, Michael wanted to pay tribute to a loyal, loving wife and mother, his best friend, and 'a marriage made in heaven."

For Susan, education was far more than a personal passion. She dedicated much of her life to teaching,



passing on her love of learning to a generation of students. So, Michael decided to make a donation to VSO in Susan's memory that will touch many lives.

"We, the VSO Sierra Leone team, are deeply grateful for Michael's generous gift in memory of Susan, which will have a lasting impact on the lives of the most marginalised and vulnerable children."

The gift will help refurbish schools in Sierra Leone, ready to provide an education to children living in poverty. This will include intensive learning sessions using educational tablets, as you may have read about on pages 10-11.

As well as helping children learn to read, write and count, Michael's tribute to Susan will also help untrained teachers complete a qualification that will equip them to inspire generations of children to pursue their learning. In this way, Susan's passions live on and continue to transform lives.

VSO is working to ensure there's a just and joyful world for everyone — today, tomorrow and for generations to come. To find out more about giving a Gift in Memory as Michael has done, please get in touch with Heidi and Rosie at legacies@vsoint.org



Asfa, a fundraiser, explains why she's proud to share her passion for VSO on the doorstep. She loves talking to people like you about creating lasting change.

Asfa, 23, has always been interested in the wider world and its injustices. It's led to her studying International Relations and Social Policy at Aston University.

She hadn't planned to become a door-to-door fundraiser for VSO, but the opportunity came up.

"I'd recently lost my father," she remembers. "I wanted to do something different alongside my studies. I thought it would only be for a few months, but two years on, I'm still here, talking to people about supporting VSO."

EDUCATION IS A RIGHT. NOT A PRIVILEGE.

Asfa recalls a pivotal moment. "I was reading about a Nepali girl called Nursat. She didn't know that girls could go to school, or work, or take on leadership roles. I thought about how empowering it must have been for Nursat to learn from a VSO volunteer that she had a right to an education like anyone else."

Asfa is passionate about the rights of women and girls. "Being

female and from a South Asian background, I feel that if I'm not going to speak about it, who will?"

"I want to keep fighting for women and girls."

The result is inspiring conversations on the doorstep, where Asfa finds people who share her wish to make a lasting difference. "When you talk with passion," she says. "It resonates with people."

VSO OPENS DOORS, AND UNLOCKS MEMORIES

Some of Asfa's most memorable experiences have been with people who have a connection to VSO.

"I remember a big smile lit up one woman's face when she opened the door. Her father had volunteered for VSO in the 1970s."

Asfa's long-term plan is to become a Human Rights Lawyer. "I want to keep fighting for women and girls," she says. *\times







Anju, Unnati and Laxmi, who live in Nepal, are all now getting an education with your support. Photos: ©VSO/Suraj Shakya

Raj and Peter write back...

Today, there's a chance to hear from Raj and Peter. Raj worked to end gender-based violence in Nepal, while Peter, a qualified teacher, helped girls in Kenya back into education. Both were part of our Sponsor a Volunteer programme, and wrote regular updates about their time with VSO.

Namaste!

Thank you for an opportunity that changed me inside and out. Volunteering for VSO, I saw another side of my country, where one in four women experiences gender-based violence. I also gained a new perspective of what is possible if we work together with a common goal.

We reached a total of 46,000 people. Among them were women who did not feel safe at home, couples, families, and community leaders. I'm proud to say there was a reduction in violence among couples we worked with, and an increase in respectful behaviour towards wives.





Puja's words will live long in my memory. She used to regret marrying her husband, Laxman, who was guided by a patriarchal mindset. But he is now a supportive partner in their life together. "Now I wish to be his wife in seven more lifetimes," Puja said.

As part of Sponsor a Volunteer, I witnessed the inherent goodness in people. The heartfelt messages from VSO supporters were a constant source of encouragement.

Thank you!

Ry Kark

Rai

Namaste! I just wanted to thank you for all the good work that you have done in Nepal and for helping me to see what my donations have done.

June from Kent, Sponsor a Volunteer supporter





My dear friend,

I miss my days as a volunteer!

I was based in Migori, Kenya, where girls face extreme poverty, early marriage, and female genital mutilation. Many are forced to leave school early, or never attend at all, leaving them with no say in the direction of their lives.

Florence* was one of the 2,000 marginalised girls we worked with. Her education ended because her abusive father would no longer cover the cost. Her sister became pregnant soon after leaving school, and died from complications. She never got the chance to join our catch-up classes, but Florence came in her place.





has achieved. She completed the catch-up classes. She was apprenticed to a local artisan. Today, she is working in a hair salon, and earning a living. Seeing what VSO volunteers can achieve thanks to your support fills me with hope.

I'm so proud of what Florence

All the best,



Peter

Congratulations to all who have helped and guided Florence thus far. May she continue to flourish.

Roger from Devon, Sponsor a Volunteer supporter

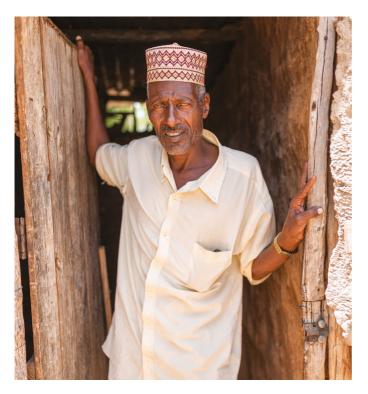
SPONSOR A VOLUNTEER

Join VSO supporters and sponsor a volunteer. Start a monthly gift and you'll hear direct from inspiring volunteers like Raj and Peter, who are working with communities to create lasting change.

Click here to sign up today, or you can visit vsoint.org/kin-sav







My journey Ibrahim Abduba

Conflict has marked Ibrahim's whole life, so he has taken the chance to build peace for his children, and their children.

y name is Ibrahim.
I am 66 years old.
I became a VSO
volunteer because
I'm passionate about peace.

I was shot when my village was attacked 30 years ago, and I have been disabled ever since. So, I know from experience that during conflicts innocent people suffer.

My community is in Kenya, close to Ethiopia. As well as local conflicts, cross-border violence spills over and affects us.

I feel bad for our children because poverty levels are very high. Droughts are killing our crops and animals. I had four goats. All are gone, and I am living from day to day.

When I discovered there was a chance to help build peace, I took it because peace changes everything.

When there is peace, you can cultivate your land. You can do business. You can educate your

children. But promoting peace is not easy.

VSO trained me in cross-border peacebuilding eight months ago. I joined the peace committee and have been educating people in the community ever since. I am proud to train others in peacebuilding.

With every conversation, attitudes change and the number of peace-builders grows.

We all face the same challenges. With VSO's support, we have looked at the causes of conflict, which include a lack of water, food, education and jobs, and we have put together a plan.

It makes me happy to be part of the changes we are making. We are bringing people together, and I hope that working with VSO will bring us lasting peace.



Photos: @VSO/Obscuramedia

DONATE NOW

Right now, VSO volunteers are working in countries in 19 countries across the world to make a difference to the lives of the most marginalised and vulnerable. They need your support, please donate today.

You can do so by:

Clicking here to visit our website 💢





Visiting **vsoint.org/kin**



(Calling **020 8780 7500**

Lines are open 9-5, Monday to Friday

We will never sell or swap your data and we promise to keep it safe and secure in accordance with our privacy policy. You can view our privacy policy at vsointernational.org/privacy

FOUR WAYS TO HELP



1. DONATE TO VSO

Donations are the best way to support volunteers working with communities to build safer, better lives. Click here or visit vsoint.org/kin



2. REMEMBER VSO IN YOUR WILL

Discover how you can back the next generation of volunteers with a gift in your Will. Click here or visit vsoint.org/giftinmywill to find out more



3. SPONSOR A VOLUNTEER

Start a monthly gift and hear directly from a VSO volunteer. Click here to sign up or visit vsoint.org/sav-kin



4. SHARE KIN WITH KINDRED SPIRITS

Share a link to Kin magazine so your friends and family can read inspiring stories about the power of volunteering.

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Views contained herein are those of contributors and not necessarily of the editors or of VSO. All content herein is owned by VSO and may not be reproduced without prior written permission from VSO. Around the world, conflict is increasing. The causes are complex, but include the impact of the climate emergency and growing competition for water, food, land and other limited resources.

Peace isn't something that just happens. It has to be built.

VSO volunteers are on the ground, bringing communities together to find pathways to lasting peace. With your help, more families could be supported to build safer, more secure lives.

Please consider making a special gift today:

Click here or visit vsoint.org/kin



