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"Every day a child isn't in school is a day lost"

Welcome to Kin!

As VSO's new Co-CEOs, we're delighted to have this opportunity to thank you for being a part of our global family. Your support helps to challenge injustice and inequality around the world, and achieve lasting change through volunteering.

VSO's role in supporting children's education features strongly in this edition.

Pakistan has the second highest number of children who aren't attending school in the world. Among them are Afghan refugees, whose families have fled conflict. On pages 4-7, you can read about how VSO volunteers are teaching children and helping them on the path to a better future.

As two women whose lives have been shaped by our own educational opportunities, we want to see all children on learning journeys that will enable them to thrive. The reality is, every day a child isn't in school is a day lost, and a day when they are in danger. So, please send a gift to help more children learn the skills that will transform their futures.



Kathryn Gordon and Donné Cameron Co-Chief Executives of VSO

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OR Harnessing the energy of young people to build a better future

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Caroline has

Cover photo: ©VSO/AkifullahKhan

FEATURE

AN EDUCATION CAN'T WAIT

An education is a universal human right, yet refugees like nine-year-old Saad* and 12-year-old Najeeba* are missing out. Having fled the conflict in Afghanistan, they're now living in Pakistan. Out of school, children are in danger. Every day counts. You can help bring them back into class.

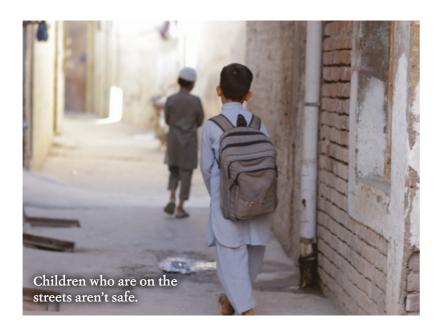
t's a school day but, on busy streets across Pakistan, you'll soon see children who aren't in class. Instead, some are picking up rubbish and collecting scrap to sell. Others are hoping to earn some money polishing shoes.

Working on the streets is dangerous. Children are at risk of violence, abuse and being taken by traffickers. Girls are rarely seen alone but that doesn't mean they're safe. Some have to do domestic work to earn money. Girls who don't attend school are often forced into marriage.

NO SCHOOL. NO FUTURE.

In Pakistan, nearly 23 million children are out of school – that's the second highest number globally.¹ Among them are thousands of Afghan children, who have fled conflict in their home country.

An education can't wait. Every day counts. But Afghan families, who are far from home and do not know how long they'll be able to remain in Pakistan, can find it impossible to get a school place for their children.



1.4 MILLION

Pakistan hosts the third largest refugee population in the world, including more than 1.4 million refugees from Afghanistan.² That's close to the total number of people in Nottingham and Bristol combined.

VSO is working in Pakistan's Balochistan and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa provinces, which border Afghanistan.

¹UNICEF ²UNHCR

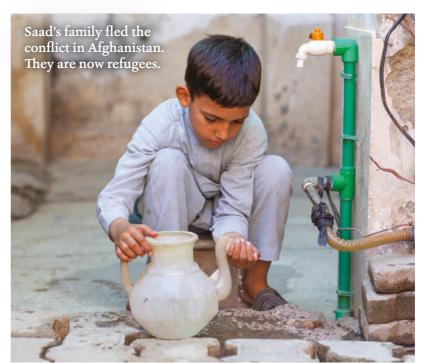
NAJEEBA'S FAMILY HAD TO FLEE

Najeeba's family was forced to leave Afghanistan when she was six years old. "We faced great difficulty in leaving. I lost a son on the way," remembers her grandmother, Zakia*. "When we got here, we lived in camps. We all had to fit in one rickety tent."

The family now has a home, but Najeeba's father has been unable to secure a job. Her older brother, a labourer at a brick kiln, supports the whole family and they struggle to make ends meet.

Najeeba's grandmother never went to school, "We couldn't afford education," Zakia says, but she wants a better life for her granddaughter. However, at the age of 12, Najeeba wasn't attending school. Like many refugees, she found her path blocked. Some lack the right documentation, others face language barriers or can't afford to put a child in school.





*Names have been changed to protect their identities.

SAAD WAS ALSO OUT OF SCHOOL

Afghanistan's recent turbulent history has had a huge impact on nine-year-old Saad's family. Saad was born in Pakistan, but his family have moved back and forth between the countries, most recently leaving Afghanistan when the schools closed.

"Without school, I just sat at home"

Saad.

But Saad was unable to enrol in school in Pakistan, despite his dad's hopes for him. "I want to see my children learn and grow as people," explains Baryal, Saad's father.

FEATURE FEATURE

CHILDREN LIKE NAJEEBA AND SAAD FIND THEIR PATH INTO EDUCATION **BLOCKED**



Status as refugees

Among the factors preventing Afghan refugee children in Pakistan from attending school are language barriers, lacking the correct documentation, and struggling to navigate the enrolment process.



Poverty

Many Afghan refugee children work, collecting rubbish or polishing shoes, to help their struggling families.



Discrimination

As in many countries, educating girls is often seen as a lower priority than educating boys. Girls are frequently expected to take on domestic responsibilities.



The impact of climate disasters

Climate disasters, including the catastrophic floods in 2022, damage and destroy schools, disrupting children's education. Some never go back to class.

SALMA IS HELPING CHILDREN INTO EDUCATION

Salma, 26, became a VSO volunteer after seeing children like Najeeba and Saad out of school. An Afghan refugee herself, she was determined to act. She joined VSO volunteers who went out into the community to find children who were out of school. They then spoke to their parents about the value of education. Out-of-school children were invited to attend VSO learning centres, which are set up in unused community spaces, hired rooms, courtyards or volunteers' homes.

"Government schools can be a long distance from people's homes and private schools are not affordable," explains Salma. "I teach in the basement of my home so it is a short walk for the children."

There are VSO learning centres across north and west Pakistan. Children attend free of charge for up to six months. Having caught up, VSO helps them transfer into local schools.

INSIDE VSO LEARNING CENTRES

Having trained as a volunteer teacher, Salma welcomes students, including Najeeba and Saad, into the classroom she's set up, where they learn to read, write and count. Salma has a whiteboard. There are brightly coloured posters on the walls. All the children have big smiles on their faces as they take part in engaging learning activities.

Before attending the VSO learning centre, Najeeba was nervous. "On the first day of school, it seemed daunting," she says, but she soon built up a circle of friends and enjoyed her classes.



CHILDREN LEARN, DREAM AND FIND HOPE FOR A BETTER FUTURE

Najeeba's time at the VSO learning centre transformed her outlook, just as Salma hoped. She started to see a different future for herself. "I want to become either a doctor or a teacher," she says. With Salma's support, Najeeba enrolled in a local school to continue her education after completing the catch-up classes.

Najeeba feels strongly that other Afghan refugee children should get the same opportunities as herself. "When I see other destitute Afghan children on the streets, I want them to enrol with VSO, so that they too can study and find a better future."

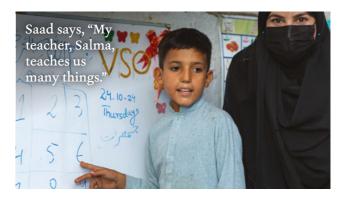
SAAD LOVES LEARNING

Like Najeeba, Saad has thrived at Salma's learning centre. He is determined to continue his education, and his parents support him. "Education is extremely valuable," says Saad's father, Baryal. "I hope my children become doctors, engineers, and other remarkable people."

"EDUCATION IS THE ONLY WAY OUT"

For Salma, education has a unique power to transform not only people's lives, but society. She is particularly passionate about enabling girls to fulfil their potential, and live and work in the way they choose.

With each girl who is educated, Salma feels more hopeful for the future. "If a single woman is educated and provided with basic learning opportunities, then she can educate an entire family." Salma herself has become a respected figure, known throughout the community as a



teacher who is changing children's lives. She now dreams of opening an even bigger learning centre.

Najeeba's grandmother, Zakia, who has seen the impact of Salma's work, says simply, "Education is a beautiful thing."

Najeeba and Saad are among the fortunate ones, who are back in education. But thousands of other refugee children are still out of school. It's not right. With your support today, it CAN change. \star

SEND A GIFT TODAY TO HELP MORE CHILDREN LIKE NAJEEBA AND SAAD BACK INTO THE CLASSROOM



LEARNING KIT:

You could help equip a child to go back into the classroom with a rucksack, pencils, sharpener, eraser and a writing book.



TEACHING KIT:

You could help cover the costs of classroom essentials. including a whiteboard, markers, pens, a class register, folding mats, maps, puzzles and a globe.



VSO VOLUNTEER:

You could support a VSO volunteer like Salma and help get more children back into class and onto the path to a brighter future.

Education can't wait. For children like Najeeba and Saad who have fled conflict, every day counts.

Please help get children back into the classroom to learn the skills that will transform their future.

You can donate using the form, call 020 8780 7500 or:

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



Photos: ©VSO/AkifullahKhan

'BE THE CHANGE YOU WISH TO SEE IN THE WORLD'

The populations of developing countries are young. As many as 70% of people living in sub-Saharan Africa, for example, are aged under 30.3 Climate emergency affects almost every aspect of their everyday lives, and casts a shadow over their future.

Volunteering can be a positive force in young people's lives. By supporting VSO, you're enabling them to become changemakers and take on a leading role in tackling the issues that affect their communities.

TANZANIA



SPEAKING UP ABOUT SEXUAL HEALTH



Tanzania's growing population of young people struggle to access sexual and reproductive health services. With your support, youth volunteers are working to remove the stigma attached to seeking information and advice. Their campaigns have reached **52,500 people** and resulted in local government and healthcare providers committing to improve their services. Young people are leading the way to a healthier, safer future.

BANGLADESH



LEADING THE WAY TO A BETTER FUTURE

For young people in Bangladesh, the threat of

climate disasters is ever-present. Rather than

feeling powerless, more than 100,000 young

volunteers now take active steps to create safer

set up, and volunteer networks are working on a

to protect themselves from climate disasters and

promoting sustainable farming.

futures. With your help, **568 youth forums** have been

whole range of issues, including helping communities



In Kenya, food production methods are struggling to cope with the needs of a growing population, and the challenges of climate change. With your support, a network of young volunteers is working to promote and adopt climate-resilient farming methods. VSO Digital Ambassadors, including Nicodemus Muriuki, have helped reach **70,000 young people.** "From climate justice to community-led climate action, there is so

GROWING FOOD. GROWING AS PEOPLE

KENYA

much work that we can be doing," says Nicodemus.

BREAKING THE SILENCE ON MENTAL HEALTH

THAILAND

Young people in Thailand are four times more likely than the general population to suffer from depression, burn out, and other mental health issues. With your support, VSO is helping young Thais create the positive change they want to see in their communities. Board games are one of the innovative tools groups of young people can use to open up about the way they feel and connect with others.

TURNING WASTE

NIGERIA



In Nigeria, many of the most marginalised communities live next to vast rubbish tips, which contaminate water supplies and cause significant health problems. With your support, 50 women and 500 young volunteers have been trained to take on leadership roles and help create cleaner, safer environments. They're training people to collect plastic waste, which can then be recycled or

repurposed, providing a valuable source of income.

REPORTING BACK REPORTING BACK

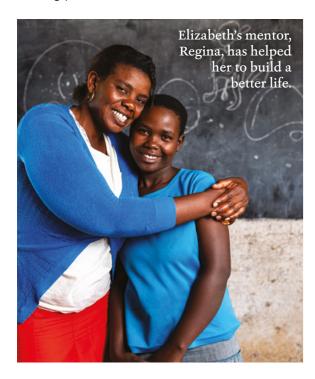
FIVE YEARS ON...

In 2020, VSO shared the stories of girls in Kenya whose education had been cut short. With the help of loyal supporters like you, Elizabeth* and Consolata* went back into the classroom. Here's the chance to hear from them - five years on.

Elizabeth was forced to leave school at the age of just 11...

When we first met Elizabeth, she told us she could hardly believe she was a wife and a mother. She was just 14 years old. She'd been forced to leave school at the age of 11 and get married. She then gave birth to her daughter, Grace*, when she was 13. She was living in extreme hardship with her husband,

Poverty. Hunger. Violence. Early marriage and motherhood – Elizabeth's day-to-day life was bleak, and she had little hope of anything better. But as she explains, she joined VSO's catch-up classes, and it proved to be a turning point in her life.



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"The classes were two minutes' walk from home," remembers Elizabeth. "My teacher, Rael, encouraged me to work hard. She taught me to read, write and count. I considered her my best friend."

Once Elizabeth completed the classes, she was ready to use her new skills. With VSO's support, she started to earn an income. "I set up a small business, selling household items like cereals, sugar, flour, milk and cooking oil."

"The skills I learnt have enabled me to become resilient."

VSO also helped Elizabeth with a mentor, Regina, who helped her gain valuable life skills, including in the areas of hygiene, sexual health and personal relationships. These have helped bring about changes at home. "My relationship with my husband has improved. We are able to sit down and try to solve issues together."

Elizabeth is now 20. She has two children. She is able to earn an income, giving her independence. She is safe at home and feels equipped to keep improving her life for herself and her family. "I want to expand my business, educate my children, and live a happy life."

Consolata's parents couldn't afford to keep her in school...

Consolata loved going to school. She hadn't wanted to leave, but when her father fell ill, there was no longer enough money to pay the fee for her to attend. She left school to help her family. A short time later, her father died and she was forced to get married. She had a child, and became a widow - all before the age of 18. But with help from people like you, she had the chance to go back into class and catch up on the education she'd missed.

"I was asking why I had to leave, while others continued."

It wasn't easy, but Consolata had the support of VSO volunteer teachers and mentors.





"In the beginning, it was difficult to read and write. Eventually, I was able to read sentences. Our teacher, Christine, also taught us maths."

After completing the course, Consolata was ready to start a small business and earn an income. She is now buying and selling used clothes. "I am happy with the life I am leading today."

Consolata has plans to grow her business because she's determined to give her daughter a better start in life than she had herself. "I will work hard to ensure that my daughter eats well, goes to school, and becomes independent."

THE BIGGER IMPACT OF EDUCATION

With your support, VSO has been able to bring girls like Elizabeth and Consolata back into the classroom, where they've gained skills that can transform their lives.



In Kenya, over **5,000 girls** attended VSO catch-up centres and gained employable skills.

- In Mozambique, VSO is currently supporting **4,190 girls** like Elizabeth and Consolata.

You've played a vital role in helping Elizabeth and Consolata on the path to a better future, but many girls need the same support.

To send a gift that could help more children back into education and transform their lives:

Click here or you can visit <u>vsoint.org/kin</u>



Photos: ©VSO/Paul Wambugu

*Names have been changed to protect their identities.

CHANGING LIVES FOR 38 YEARS

VSO has worked in Pakistan since 1987. Today, VSO volunteers are changing lives in three out of this vast country's five provinces - Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab. Stretching across 881,913 square kilometres, Pakistan has a range of spectacular landscapes. High in the Karakoram mountains, you can see ice rivers 60 kilometres wide. In the south, there are the vast plains of the Indus River basin.

Click here to read more vsoint.org/pakistan

FIGHTING FOR THE **RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND GIRLS**

Malala Yousafzai, who was born in Pakistan, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014 at the age of 17 - the youngest ever winner. VSO volunteers share Malala's goal of ensuring girls have equal rights to an education. With your support,

32,400 of the most marginalised children are returning to class with

a focus on girls, refugees and those living with disabilities.

5 THINGS ABOUT PAKISTAN...

...and how you're helping VSO volunteers improve lives - from enabling children to go to school, to helping communities protect themselves from the impact of the climate emergency.

PLANTING TREES. **PROTECTING LIVES**

Pakistan is fifth on the Global Climate Risk Index. Air pollution, deforestation and a water crisis are among the environmental threats to people's daily lives. With your support, VSO is helping communities to become more resilient. In 2024, VSO volunteers worked with teachers and students to plant over **6,500 trees** in 140 government schools.

EVERY DAY COUNTS

During the 2022 floods, schools across Pakistan were damaged, destroyed and left under water. disrupting the education of more than **3.5 million** children.4 As a VSO supporter, you helped children to go back to school. Work continues to enable children, who remain out of education, to attend learning centres

Click here to watch a video showing how you're helping vsoint.org/back-to-school

and catch up.

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YOUNG AND FULL **OF POTENTIAL**

In Pakistan, more than 60% of the population

is under the age of 30. With your support, young people are turning their ideas, energy and fresh perspectives into a positive force that transforms lives. Members of VSO's vouth network are using their voices to tackle issues from the climate emergency to women's rights. They're taking on leadership roles and bringing hope to their communities.

VSO volunteers have worked with students and teachers to plant more than

6,500 trees in 140 schools

across Pakistan.

VSO volunteers are working to create lasting change in Pakistan. Send a gift to help transform more lives:

Click here or you can visit vsoint.org/kin





access an education, including girls, refugees and those living with disabilities.



A CHANGEMAKER'S STORY FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

SPEAKING UP. **CHANGING LIVES.**

Every day, stigma and discrimination prevent some of the most marginalised people from accessing sexual and reproductive health services. In Kenya, Josephine, who has cerebral palsy, was turned away from hospital when she was in labour. Now, you're helping her to speak out and make change happen.

Can vou tell us about yourself, Josephine?

I live in Kenya. I was born with cerebral palsy, and I campaign for people with disabilities to have equal access to sexual and reproductive health services.

What are your experiences of trying to access health services?

When it was time for me to give birth to my son, I was turned away from the hospital. The doctor said, "We don't handle such people here." We had to look for another hospital, where eventually I gave birth to a healthy baby boy.

MAKUENI COUNTY HOSPITAL

NAME:

OCCUPATION:

What motivated you to become a campaigner?

People think if you have a disability, you're not sexually active and you don't have the right to have a family. This makes accessing sexual and reproductive health services difficult. I'm advocating for a country that's free of discrimination, where everyone feels safe, and people with disabilities aren't afraid to go to hospital.

How did VSO's training help you?

If you are not at the table where decisions are being made, you will not be on the menu. With VSO's support, I have learned the right skills. I have become vocal on social media in the right manner,



and I am equipped to continue my advocacy journey.

What are you most proud of achieving so far?

I was able to partner with one of our MPs. When she heard my story, she was so impressed that she promised to work with me. That's a success to me. *

Teresia helps young people find answers

With your support, VSO opened up a dialogue between local youth groups and sexual and reproductive health nurses like Teresia.

"We learned that young girls are sometimes afraid to come to the hospital. So we set up a youth centre with all services under one roof. We provide information to young people and adapt the message to their level. They ask questions and we help them find the answers they need. There is a lot of attention to privacy."

Photos: ©VSO/Brian Ngali

For the next generation of volunteers

"The cure to boredom is curiosity. There is no cure for curiosity." So said US writer, poet and critic, Dorothy Parker, and David, VSO supporter and former volunteer, couldn't agree more.

uriosity has been a powerful and positive force in David's life. It's taken him to multiple countries to live, study and work, including Canada, where he met his future wife Bernice in 1966.

"I'm from Northern Ireland," says David. "I travelled to Canada to study for an MSc at McGill University." Bernice, who grew up in the Great Lakes region of the US, was teaching Classics in Montreal.

David and Bernice married in the UK and enjoyed 55 happy and adventurous years together. They raised two daughters, while also pursuing fulfilling careers. Bernice taught, while David worked as a hydrologist. They lived in Zambia and Malawi, before settling in Northumberland.

After their children had grown up, Bernice applied to become a VSO volunteer, and she trained teachers in Pakistan from 1999 to 2001. David was inspired to



join her, working on hydrology and climate change in the upper Indus River.

"We both thoroughly enjoyed our time in Pakistan with VSO, and the people we met were very welcoming."

For David, their time in Pakistan is among the memories he treasures of his late wife, whom he describes as 'quiet, determined, committed

"The impact of climate change and of exponential growth is clear to see, but I maintain the hope that everyone gets to experience peace, joy and happiness."

Today, David continues to be busy. "Having four grandchildren is a joy," he says.

A committed environmentalist, David now stays close to home. He walks every day. He's never owned a television and doesn't plan to, because through reading and research, he can continue to go wherever his curiosity takes him.

During their lives together, Bernice and David supported a range of charities. David is remembering VSO in his Will – motivated by his hopes and fears

"The impact of climate change and of exponential growth is clear to see, but I maintain the hope that everyone gets to experience peace, joy and happiness." *

Inspired to remember VSO in your Will and back the next generation of volunteers? Please get in touch with Heidi or Rosie at legacies@vsoint.org to find out more



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EARLY LEARNING EARLY LEARNING



Every child should experience the joy of playing. With your help, Ella* and Joshua* are among 150,000 children in Rwanda who are having serious fun because, while playing, they are also learning. But other children are missing out on the first building blocks of their education.

ive-year-old Joshua is building a tower. It takes focus to balance the building blocks, and it'll be brilliant fun to knock it down. But if you'd visited Joshua's classroom only a short time ago, you wouldn't have seen him playing. You probably wouldn't have seen him at all.



Rwanda is taking great strides to improve education and to tackle the challenges of very large class sizes and not enough resources. Although things are improving, 83% of children aged 3 to 5 are still below the expected level for literacy and numeracy for their age.5 With your help,



VSO is working with 2,000 teachers like Olivier in 734 schools to tackle the problem early.

Olivier has a class of nearly 60 children. "Before VSO came, I didn't like to go to school," says Joshua, who became very anxious in the noisy, overcrowded classroom. He struggled to interact with other children and stopped talking at school.



OU'VE HELPED CHILDREN PLAY AND LEARN

Thanks to you, VSO volunteers introduced Olivier and other teachers to the importance of play. It's how young children learn, and it also gives them joy.

"Before VSO came, children were taught in the same way as adult students" - Olivier.

Today, Olivier never runs out of fun ways for his class to play and learn. That's because VSO volunteers trained him to plan

Photos: @VSO/Eric Nkurunziza 5NISR National Institute for Statistics of Rwanda *Names have been changed to protect their identities.

engaging activities. He can also use the VSO app to build his knowledge and skills about learning through play and access teaching materials.

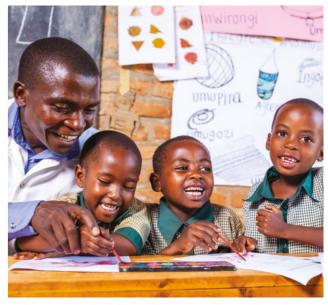


Nadine* has seen a huge change in her daughter, fouryear-old Ella. "When she comes home, she shares with me how school went. My daughter speaks very well."

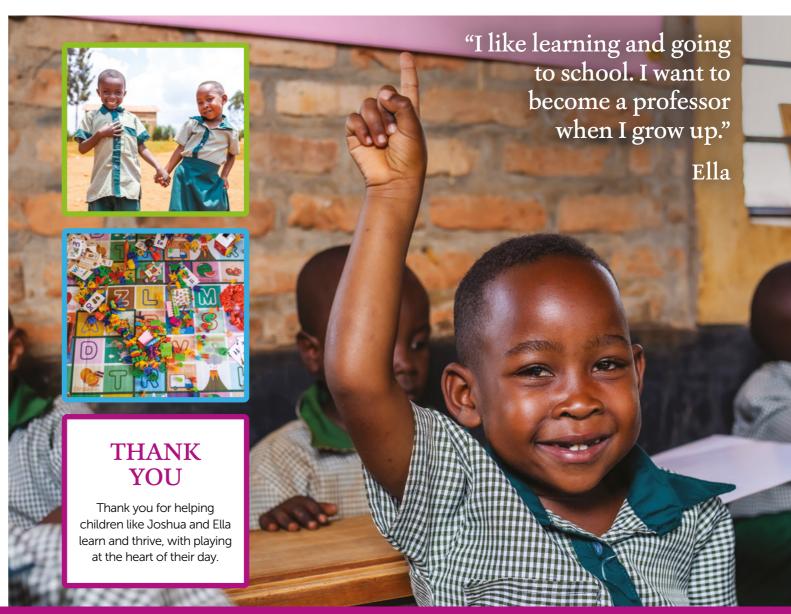
Nadine is determined to keep Ella in school. "Education is the ladder to the future," she says. "I want my daughter to study and reach where I couldn't get myself."

Alphonsine, Joshua's mum, also feels positive about

"My son had a major issue with social anxiety, but he is improving. Education is very important, and it is what I am missing. I hope he does not struggle the way I am. He has a pillar of education to lean on." \star



▲ Olivier is giving the children in his class a good start to their education. ◀◀The classroom is full of smiles as Joshua (on the right) and his friends have fun and learn.



journey

Caroline

Caroline*, a survivor of sexual assault, has brought women in her community together to heal, find hope, and earn an income. With your support today, more people can transform their lives. Warning: Caroline's story contains references to assault.

y name is Caroline. I grew up here near of Nairobi, Kenya. My father was a drunk. I was forced to leave school and work on the streets, so that we could eat and have a roof over our heads.

During this time, I was sexually assaulted by a number of men. I was 15. After, I found out I was pregnant. Somehow, I survived. I see now that my daughter has made me who I am today. I wanted a better life for us both.

A few years passed. I knew many women in my community and they knew me. I organised a meeting, where I talked about my sexual assault. Others began to speak about what had happened to them. We shared stories. We cried. We connected. I told them, 'There is hope.

We started to meet regularly and focus on the problem of trash. Trucks bring more rubbish here every day. We

started to clean up, calling ourselves the Ahadi Queens.

Soon after, a VSO volunteer approached us. We joined VSO training sessions, which covered both life and work. We gained new skills and started to look at how waste collecting could bring in a better income for us. We learned to sort the rubbish into different types of plastic to get a better price at the recycling centre, and we got equipment to work safely.

Working together, we have found strength. We have healed, and we are building better lives.

We shared stories. We cried. We connected. I told them, 'There is hope.'

Today, I can smile and say, 'I am happy.' I am married. I have a daughter, and we have a home. I have come a long way. *



Photos: ©VSO/Obscuramedia *Name has been changed to protect her identity.

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:

MLFCH2503xMAG

Clicking here to visit our website 💢







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

At a time when fewer people are supporting international development, donate to help transform 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 to help achieve lasting change and hear directly from a VSO volunteer. Click here to sign up or visit vsoint.org/sav-kin



4. SHARE KIN WITH KINDRED SPIRITS

When you've finished with Kin, pass it on, and share inspiring stories about the power of volunteering.



Donations will be distributed across all areas of VSO's work and used to help fight poverty in 19 countries where our volunteers work with local partners to help improve health, education and livelihoods.

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EVERYDAY COUNTS.

An education is a fundamental human right. But many children – including Afghan refugees in Pakistan – are missing out on learning the skills they need to build a better life.

Please donate to help get more children like Najeeba back into the classroom:

Click here or visit vsoint.org/kin



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