

The power OF CHANGE



ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS
2023/24 VSO NETHERLANDS





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Introduction

In today's world, the importance of active citizenship is underscored by the rise of populism in environments where people feel disconnected, seeking a sense of belonging and identity. Active citizenship helps counter this by promoting inclusion, understanding, and shared responsibility. When individuals feel they belong and can contribute to their communities, it reduces the appeal of divisive ideologies. Thus, fostering a culture of active citizenship is crucial in combatting the rise of extremism and ensuring a more just and equitable society.

At VSO, our goal is to make lasting change through volunteering. By supporting changemakers all over the world who are making a difference in their own communities, we strive for a fair world for everyone. The struggle for access to healthcare, education, and livelihoods has not become easier over the past year. For example, in Uganda, the Anti-Homosexuality Bill was passed. And Uganda is not the only country where sexual and reproductive rights are under pressure. As the effects of climate change are felt in the communities we work in, our changemakers work tirelessly to ensure people remain resilient and their livelihoods are protected.

ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

ACTIVE, the backbone program of VSO, aims to reach 2.5 million people across 19 countries - Bangladesh, Cambodia, eSwatini, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Nepal, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia - by mobilizing marginalized groups, such as women, young people, and those with disabilities, to act on the issues that are most important to them and their communities. With this approach VSO helps to strengthen locally led organizations and create a culture of active citizenship, where marginalized people actively engage with their own development, while building the capacity of partner countries to respond to the needs of their citizens across healthcare, education, and livelihoods.

SUSTAINABLE CHANGE

In the last year, VSO contributed to creating more inclusive, open, resilient, and equal societies. It supports marginalized and vulnerable people to take action on development issues that are important to them. We have strengthened civil society and build a culture of volunteerism and civic engagement, while also building the capacity of governments and service providers to respond to the demands of their citizens. By enabling people, and in turn, their organizations and communities, to play a more active role in development, VSO will continue to provide the means to achieve more sustainable change. This proactive involvement is vital for a vibrant democracy, fostering inclusivity, accountability, and social cohesion, ultimately leading to more resilient and equitable societies.

Irene Sleven and Merijn de Jong
Co-directors VSO Netherlands



IRENE SLEVEN



MERIJN DE JONG

Our strategy in numbers

VSO Netherlands is part of the Global VSO organisation. These pages show the results that we have achieved together.



11,459 people volunteered with VSO

VSO worked with communities in 36 countries.

24.8 million

people were reached, 4.2 million of them directly, including:



Nearly

3.6m

through our education projects



94%

being youth, aged between 15 and 24



Nearly

0.2m

through our health projects



3%

of the people we worked with were people living with disability



Over

0.4m

through our resilient livelihoods programme



52%

of the people we worked with were women

Numbers represent impact achieved in the first two years of VSO's current strategic plan.



Our vision



A fair world for everyone

Our purpose

**Creating lasting
change through
volunteering**





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



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



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



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

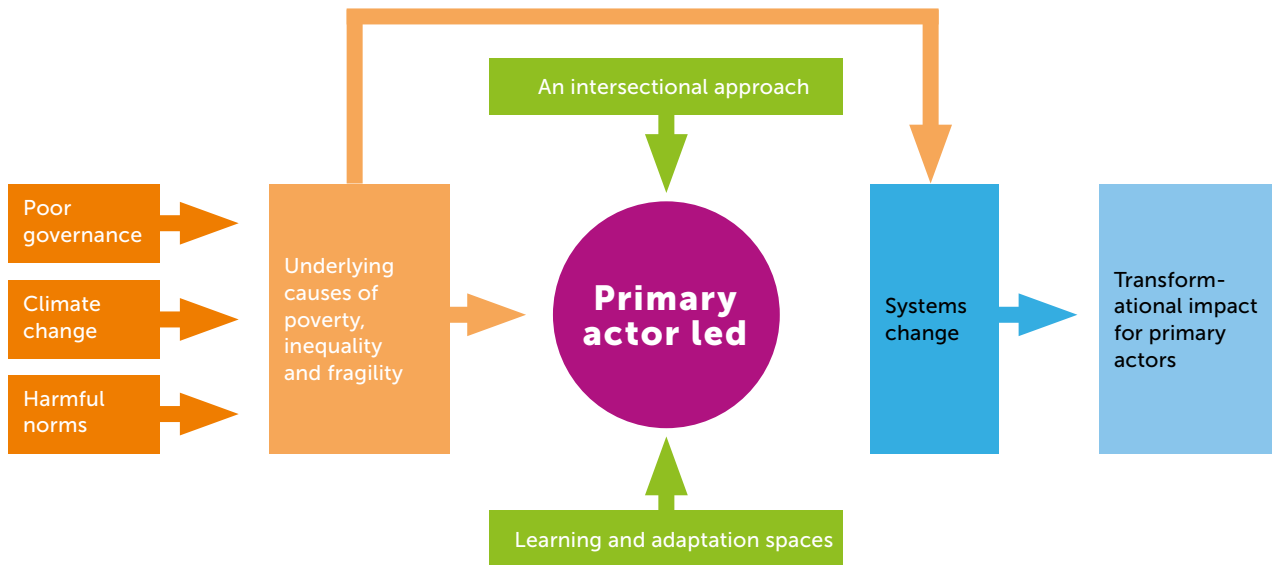
Doing development differently



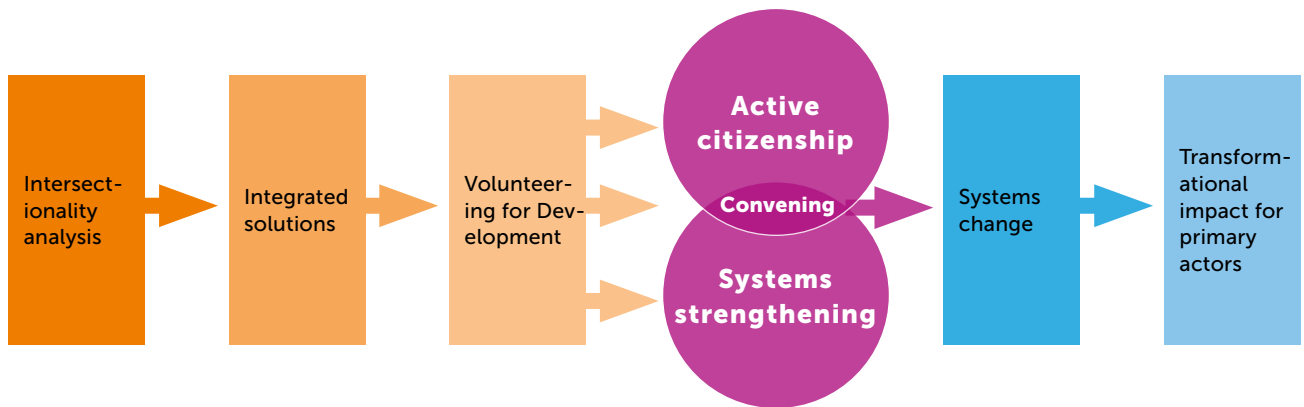
Our Volunteering for Development Approach

VSO's volunteering for development method provides opportunity for everybody to bring about lasting change.

The change we want to see... a systems approach



How it happens...VSO's value addition



It does that by focusing 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.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY PRIMARY ACTORS?

Primary actors are those marginalised people in the communities we work with. They are the ones engaging in projects, helping us 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, it works alongside them.

Our Volunteering for Development method recognises the importance of relationships in forging a shared understanding and commitment and building collective action for lasting change. Through teams of community, national and international volunteers, Volunteering for Development 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 citizens everywhere to step forward and drive the change that will create a fair world for everyone. Together we are changemakers.

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 approach, ensuring the people we work with have the confidence and capacity to bring about change in their own lives.

SOCIAL INCLUSION AND GENDER

Millions of people face discrimination because of their gender, age, disability, cultural background and 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 help communities and societies prepare and adapt to disasters, as well as reducing their vulnerability to shocks and stresses.

SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Many people around the world are denied their basic rights. Corruption, fear, and unequal power dynamics stop people from speaking up and demanding what they're entitled to. VSO works to support people exercising their voice, no matter who they are or where they are from. We also help authorities respond to the needs of the people they are there to serve.

Finally, our Volunteering for Development Method is underpinned by a set of guiding “People First” principles. These are informed by feminist leadership practice to ensure our work allows meaningful participation by primary actors to deliver inclusion and sustainable change. There are four principles:

People-centred

Primary actors are at the heart of everything we do. We dismantle all forms of bias that result from the advantages and disadvantages given by our societies and cultures to certain groups of people and not to others.



Accountable

We are each accountable for the decisions we make, what we say, how we act and how we make others feel.



Reflective in our Practice

We are aware of ourselves, the impact we have on others and the social and cultural context in which we operate. We continuously learn to improve our own practice and encourage others to do the same.



Evidence Based

In everything that we do, we base our decisions on research and evidence. We remain conscious that our bias and prejudice may influence our evidencing.



©VSO/Emeka Emwe

This beekeeping project is an Active-funded project which is supporting young people, women and people with disabilities find alternative sources of income in the Geita region in Tanzania.



Saadia, a 14 year old girl, dropped out of a local government school due to financial restraints and body shaming, Pakistan.

A country marked by fragility and a significant youth bulge, is grappling with a staggering 26 million out of school children, high rates of youth unemployment and a persistent challenge of unskilled labour.

VSO is supporting communities to rise to these challenges through the Multi-Year Resilience Programme (MYRP) funded through the Education Cannot Wait fund and the Active Citizenship Through Inclusive Volunteering and Empowerment (ACTIVE) project funded by the UK government. Together, these projects represent a strategic response to the country's educational barriers by fostering a community-driven empowerment approach, building active citizenship that is strengthening the education system and driving positive change at the grassroots level.

The MYRP project oversees the establishment of Early Childhood Education and Catch Up Learning Programme centres in crisis-affected communities, providing accelerated learning opportunities to out of school children. Community volunteers – or “education champions” as they are known locally – are trained to provide teaching support to children in the centres, not only bridging gaps in education service delivery but also promoting social accountability and resilience within the communities they serve. In partnership with Peshawar University, ACTIVE exemplifies the ethos of volunteering and empowerment by mobilising youth as catalysts for change. Through capacity-building workshops, and youth engagement, university volunteers have built their confidence and skills in policy and advocacy, community development and stakeholder engagement. Working in the MYRP education centres, these volunteers have improved the learning environment for children, through enrolment campaigns in the community, and by providing support in the classroom with inclusive play-based learning. In doing so, they are enhancing the quality of education in their communities. And they are also building their own skills, capacity and employability. University volunteers' own words describe the catalytic impact of investing in young people as active citizens:



“I've seen firsthand the impact of community-based education, and I'm inspired to establish a similar initiative in my hometown. With support from organisations like VSO, I believe I can make a meaningful difference in the lives of children in undeserved areas.”

“The practical experience and skills I've gained here will undoubtedly enhance my prospects in the job market. Employers value hands-on experience and the ability to work in diverse settings, both of which I've cultivated during my time as a university volunteer.”

Transforming Education

Through Foundational Learning in Rwanda

The past year witnessed the closing of the 6-year UK government funded Building Learning Foundations (BLF) project in Rwanda. Over the life of this project, VSO and its partners have made significant strides in improving education for lower primary pupils across the whole of the country. 2.6 million children, with over half being girls, have had their educational horizons broadened through the BLF project.

260 national and international volunteers delivered this paradigm shift in Rwanda's primary education system, accompanying and developing school leaders, teachers, parents and local authorities with capacity building in teacher development, school leadership and inclusion.

EMPOWERING EDUCATORS AND MENTORS

The BLF project boosted teaching competency by a remarkable 47%, fostering a nurturing environment for growth and learning. Our volunteers have ignited a spark in 30,000 teachers, a majority of whom are women, honing their competency in English and Mathematics. They

have empowered 2,650 school-based mentors – again, predominantly women – alongside 40 school inspectors, elevating the capabilities of nearly 13,000 educational leaders and influencers. Finally, VSO volunteers have mentored, inspired and supported over 13,000 parents to champion quality learning outcomes for the most vulnerable children, especially girls, across Rwanda.



The BLF programme helps strengthen teacher development, school leadership and governance. It builds inclusive and impactful education for Rwandan children, no matter who they are, where they come from or what support they need.

UNLEASHING POSITIVE LEARNING OUTCOMES

The project endline report showcases significant improvements in English and Mathematics proficiency among learners. With Mathematics proficiency soaring by 59% and English by an impressive 42%, we've achieved gender parity in results for both subjects, ensuring every child, regardless of gender, has an equal shot at success.

CHAMPIONING INCLUSION

Noteworthy strides have been made in identifying and supporting pupils with Special Educational Needs, with a remarkable 25% increase in teachers providing inclusive support. Through strategic partnerships and innovative methodologies, we've catalysed the adoption of inclusive education policies across 500 schools, paving the way for a more equitable and accessible educational landscape. There is more to be done in this area. Children with disabilities still face unique hurdles, with significantly lower proficiency rates compared to their peers, highlighting the urgent need for tailored support and inclusive practices.

STRENGTHENING SYSTEMS AND FUTURE PLANS

The journey doesn't end here – using our Volunteering for Development approach, VSO is strengthening education systems from the ground up. From community-driven learning groups to comprehensive coaching and mentoring, we're empowering teachers and education managers at every level. By institutionalising Special Needs Education Coordinators (SNECOs) and Inclusive Education Focal Teachers, we're laying the foundation for sustainable, inclusive education practices.

With the formal recognition of SNECOs by the Ministry of Education and with strategic partners like UNICEF and the World Bank supporting the approach, we hope this institutional platform will enable Rwanda to transform education by equipping teachers, empowering students and fostering inclusive education environments for all.



Attending a BLF Community of Practice session, different teachers meet at least once a fortnight to share their experiences and practice in English and Mathematics. Each session is led or coached by a different teacher as part of the BLF mentorship programme, Rulindo, Rwanda.

A Journey of Agency and Voice

For Women's Collectives in Kenya

VSO is committed to building the agency and amplifying the voice of primary actors, including that of rural women. Our work aims to strengthen rural women's capacity through collective action, fostering a ripple effect of positive change in their communities.

In communities across Kenya, persistent patriarchal norms mean that women often lack the confidence and the space to make the changes they want in their lives. With limited awareness on how to advocate for themselves and their rights, there are few opportunities for them to raise issues to duty bearers. Women are left reliant on men in their communities to provide and support their households. These are the issues the UK government funded, ACTIVE project is striving to address.

CREATING THE SPARK: WOMEN COMING TOGETHER

Women have clear ideas of activities they want to start and businesses they want to set up, but lack the power to create the foundations to build from and build relationships to secure hardware and financial assistance. To address this gap, VSO volunteers are working closely with women's collectives through training and advocacy sessions. By creating a space in which women can come together to learn and take action, women's collectives stand as vibrant hubs of activity, each weaving a unique tapestry of empowerment within their local contexts. From the shores of Kilifi to the arid lands of Turkana and the fertile grounds of Makweni, these collectives engage in a myriad of initiatives to achieve positive change in their communities, showcasing resilience, creativity and determination.

TENDING THE FIRE: BUILDING CAPACITY AND CONFIDENCE

Training, mentorship and accompaniment have boosted women's confidence and enabled them to articulate their ideas to duty bearers. Across the three counties where VSO is active, women

are now sought after to provide their insights during the development of new policies by local government entities.

VSO volunteers have also provided collectives with professional skills training. Women's groups are now well-prepared to apply for government loans and grants when they become available. In Makueni, the Huruma Asili Women's Group successfully submitted a proposal for a modified solar drier to the Agriculture Sector Development Support Programme. This equipment has enabled the group to sell larger quantities of dried fruit and vegetables at local markets and to diversify their products, enhancing the collective's resilience to changing circumstances and climate change impacts.

Through VSO's entrepreneurship training, leaders within women's collectives including group treasurers have become more involved in community savings and loans initiatives and have developed their skills in managing finances. This enhanced financial literacy has contributed to their increased financial independence.

FANNING THE FLAMES: WOMEN TAKING ACTION

With VSO's support, women's collectives have participated in diverse activities, including mangrove restoration, fish farming, food production, and table banking. The Kidundu Mtongani collective has successfully mobilised and trained 150 local youth in mangrove planting and restoration efforts, resulting in the planting of 10,000 mangroves every fortnight. The Ecodada collective has collaborated with the county government, VSO, and sub-county officers to provide inputs to the Climate Change Act.

SPREADING THE FIRE: STRENGTH IN UNITY

Women's collectives demonstrate the power of collective action and advocacy. They can also play an important role in supporting the most vulnerable people within their communities. No matter what brings women together, the holistic support provided by VSO volunteers to women's collectives with technical skills and rights awareness training is crucial to them addressing the multiple issues faced by women and girls. Through our Volunteering for Development approach, women's collectives everywhere stand a better chance to claim their rights and to ignite change in their communities to achieve the empowerment of women and girls, and gender equality.

Arise and Shine, has 15 active members. All are young women aged 18 to 35 years old. They have been affected heavily by climate change impacts that have resulted due to erratic weather patterns and prolonged droughts, making it hard to produce enough food from their farms.

Now the group has adapted to use climate friendly farming strategies using clean energy and a solar pump for irrigation. The group used to have to fetch water for three hours a day in order to irrigate the farm. This time has been saved by the use of the solar pump, giving them more time to engage in other economic activities to improve their income.



Empowering Adolescent Girls

To Learn and Earn in Mozambique

129 million girls around the world are out of school. At VSO we are tackling this issue head on through programmes such as the Empowering Adolescent Girls to Learn and Earn (EAGLE) project in Mozambique, funded by the Canadian government.

This project focuses on empowering vulnerable girls and young women through non-formal education providing them with the tools they need to thrive. Through innovative programming and strategic partnerships, we seek to break barriers, promote gender equality, and create a brighter future for all.

EDUCATIONAL EMPOWERMENT: BREAKING BARRIERS, BUILDING FUTURES

VSO's innovative approach to non-formal education centres on a model of Accelerated Learning, which paves the way for vulnerable girls and young women who are out of school to reclaim their educational journey. Through "catch-up" classes which allow them to re-enter formal education or through lifelong learning opportunities in entrepreneurship and vocational skills training, we're rewriting the narrative of

exclusion. The EAGLE project is more than just literacy and numeracy; it's a comprehensive journey of empowerment, addressing vital issues like sexual and reproductive health and rights and combating gender-based violence (GBV). Through collaboration with Teacher Training Centres run by our Mozambican partner ADPP, we ensure our programmes are inclusive and gender transformative, equipping community teachers with the skills they need to support diverse learners. To support participation, we provide access to learning materials through the Social Action Fund, offering financial assistance for childcare and learning resources. But we don't stop there. Our Self-Help Groups empower girls economically, providing them with small grants to kickstart income-generating activities and foster financial independence.



Volunteer Adérito and community support teacher Pascoa discussing a digital literacy session. The EAGLE project aims to empower adolescent girls aged 15-18 years who dropped out of school for reasons such as early pregnancy, early marriage, chronic disease, disability and extreme poverty. Manica and Sofala provinces, Mozambique.

©VSO/Ramadane Mussa Assane



Through partnerships with the District Health Directorate, we facilitate access to essential health services, including family planning and prevention of sexually transmitted infection. Moreover, our work has enabled hundreds of girls to obtain Poverty Certificates, granting them access to vital services that they would otherwise be unable to afford.

**IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS:
SHAPING FUTURES, SPARKING CHANGE**

In the past year alone, VSO has reached almost 2,000 girls and young women, providing digitalised literacy and numeracy training to 1,000 girls, with 95% securing financial support from the Social Action Fund. Over 650 girls are now enrolled in Teaching and Learning Centres, receiving advanced life skills and entrepreneurship training. But our impact stretches beyond the classroom – we’re champions of health and well-being, combatting gender based violence, preventing early marriage, and promoting girls’ right to education and sexual reproductive health and rights.

Through dynamic collaborations with Boys Clubs and local radio stations, we’ve ignited community-wide discussions on gender equality and girls’ empowerment, engaging thousands in our mission. Our community-led awareness campaigns working in local languages with radio stations and with community theatre have facilitated positive behaviour change and empowered girls to become advocates for change in their communities. Almost half a million Mozambicans participated in 29 debates on radio.

Our community theatre partners and community volunteers have directly engaged over 4,000 people. VSO Community Facilitators referred 80 girls living with HIV/AIDS to access HIV/AIDS testing, clinical counselling, family planning and nutritional supplements. VSO also revitalised and built the capacity of 227 members of Child Protection Community Committees (CPCCs) to lead work with communities and government

institutions to end early marriage. And during the year, the CPCCs rescued 35 girls from early marriage and reported 27 cases of school dropout due to sexual violence, family pressure and early pregnancies.

**LIVELIHOOD EMPOWERMENT:
NURTURING ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE**

But our journey doesn’t end with education – we’re committed to equipping girls and young women with the skills they need to thrive economically. Through personalised business and entrepreneurship training, we’ve empowered 658 girls to launch their own businesses and pursue income-generating activities. Our efforts in reusable sanitary pad production not only promote hygiene but also offer avenues for income generation. With Savings Groups, over 650 girls have access to capital for their ventures, fostering financial independence and resilience. 25% of girls who received small-scale business loans now boast savings of \$949, a testament to their resilience and entrepreneurial spirit. At VSO, we’re not just changing lives; we’re shaping futures, one empowered girl at a time.

**CONTINUING THE INCLUSIVE
EDUCATION JOURNEY**

Making sure that girls have the educational foundation to build their confidence and pursue opportunities benefits not only the girls themselves, but has a positive ripple impact on the development and well-being of their families and communities. Using our Accelerated Learning model to bring out-of-school girls back into an educational journey, VSO is committed to igniting a process of transformation for whole communities, ensuring that everybody is moving towards a fair world for all.

“Young women are now empowered and can be selected to be committee members. They now have income through agroecology crop sales and can make important decisions in the household.”

Life is layered with vulnerabilities if you're a woman living in the Manica province of Mozambique which borders Zimbabwe. Communities here bear the brunt of the cyclones that sweep through Mozambique. Declining land productivity affects food security and government instability means an inadequate response to communities' needs. In a context where reliance on agriculture is high, traditional practices are causing deforestation and wildfires. Women experience social, cultural and economic barriers that limit their productivity and ability to fully participate in agricultural development, including unequal access to resources, and land ownership.

Agroecology, with its focus on natural inputs and sustainable farming methods, offers tangible pathways towards resilience and sustainability amidst the challenges posed by climate change and natural disasters. Recognising the critical role that women play in farming and the production of food for their families and communities, VSO is working with 60 small holder young women farmers to deliver the benefits of agroecology in the communities of Dombe and Rotanda. Expert volunteers from the Committee of National Volunteers are providing training in the use of organic fertilisers, sustainable farming practices to conserve water and increase production, and the use of local seeds. Women are also trained in resilience and disaster risk reduction to increase their ability to plan for, and manage, future shocks. To support the farmers getting started on their journey, VSO also delivers kits that contain seeds and the core equipment needed to farm. Young women farmers in these communities have increased their families' food security, are earning income from the sales of their produce, are redefining social norms in their communities and have gained confidence in bringing their issues to duty bearers.



“We now know how to approach (duty bearers) and air our issues because of training from the project. We are in constant contact with duty bearers, and this has improved the relationship between us...”

“We meet with the local authorities and the farmers and have monthly visits. The authorities interact with farmers. Authorities are mobile as they go to address problems. For example, last month (the authorities) distributed seed and had a meeting for end of year planning with the schools. Here we aired our needs. The community was there too, presenting their issues to the service bearers.”

Unleashing Potential

with the Girls Inclusive Education Network in Nepal

Harmful social norms and inadequate strategic efforts on gender responsive and inclusive education are compromising the future of a large proportion of Nepal's growing youth population.

To facilitate action to address these issues, VSO has forged a strong partnership between girls, government, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and schools to establish the Girls and Inclusive Education Network (GIEN). This network is not just an alliance, it's a pathway to empower girls and children with disabilities, ensuring their right to inclusive education, life skills, and livelihood is honoured.

FORGING STRONG ALLIANCES: BUILDING GIEN FROM THE GROUND UP

In a collaborative effort with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) and the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD), VSO has laid the foundation for 218 GIENs across Nepal. VSO volunteers are the catalysts of change, igniting awareness and developing over 5,000 advocates for girls' and children's rights. As a result, these networks now boast 5,144 dedicated members, including students, youth mentors ("Big Sisters"), teachers, school management associations, parent teacher associations, CSOs, and government officials at various levels.

FROM GRASSROOTS TO FEDERAL: A NETWORK OF EMPOWERMENT

At the federal level, GIEN thrives under the auspices of the Centre for Education and Human Resource Development (CEHRD). Provincial and municipal levels echo this commitment, with 7 networks hosted by MoSD and 41 networks at the municipality level. Additionally, 169 networks operate at the grassroots, ensuring education reaches every corner of the community. CEHRD takes the helm, spearheading strategic leadership and implementing the GIEN Strategy in alignment

with the Nepal School Education Sector Plan (SESP). VSO's expert volunteers provide support and technical assistance to both the CEHRD and the GIEN, ensuring a seamless journey towards inclusive education for all. Working closely with VSO technical expert volunteers, CEHRD has developed the Inclusive GIEN Strategy 2024 and the GIEN Standard 2024 which has been officially endorsed and approved by the MoEST.

BRIDGING THE GAP: A PATHWAY TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Through strategic partnerships, we've bridged the gap between government, marginalised communities, and CSOs, resulting in a surge in enrolment for girls and children with disabilities. Over 2,500 girls have gained access to inclusive education through GIEN engagements with the government, while 169 schools have become bastions of awareness, empowering girls and children with disabilities to claim their right to education with confidence. In our journey with GIEN, barriers dissolve, and opportunities multiply. Together, we're seeking to rewrite the narrative of education in Nepal.

BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER: THE VSO WAY

Convening the right people and institutions to dialogue and to take action on issues affecting the lives of marginalised people is a key pathway under VSO's approach towards systems change. VSO will continue to use the power of volunteering to create these trusted spaces, navigating solutions between primary actors and duty bearers that carry the potential for transformational and sustainable impact.

Key Project Highlights

65%

of surveyed women decide how to spend their income, and 38% decide how to spend their income jointly, with their families.

81%

of women surveyed mentioned that access to financial services, e.g., banks, savings groups and micro-finance improved because of VSO's interventions.

60%

of surveyed women decide how to spend their income, and 38% decide how to spend their income jointly, with their families.

88%

of the women surveyed mentioned that the project helped improve financial literacy, financial independence, and control over income.



©VSO/Lisa Marie David

Aliya* is part of a women's group who have been trained in how to turn water hyacinth, a naturally occurring plant waste that is overgrown in her community, into biofertiliser, Philippines.

Youth and Active Citizenship:

Empowering Change Across Borders

Over the past year, VSO has continued to strengthen youth networks with over 5,000 members in 17 countries to enhance youth leadership in development.

These youth networks are a powerful demonstration of the impact of active citizenship. They have been central to advancing inclusion, accountability and resilience within communities, institutions and policies around the world.

PHILIPPINES: **BUILDING RESILIENCE, SUSTAINING PEACE**

In the Bangsamoro Region and its adjacent provinces in the Philippines, persistent challenges of poverty, climate vulnerability and conflict have long cast a shadow over communities, affecting people's access to basic services and economic opportunities. Through the UK government funded ACTIVE grant, youth volunteers are working with other partners in leading the movement to build resilience and sustain peace. These young changemakers are not just catalysts for change; they're architects of hope. They have supported fisherfolk, ex-combatants, marginalised women, young people and people with disabilities (PWD) to develop income-generating social enterprises, protect natural marine resources and maintain social cohesion.

ETHIOPIA: **FOSTERING DIALOGUE, AMPLIFYING VOICES**

Straddling the Kenya-Ethiopia border, marginalised youth in the fragile Moyale and Miyo regions of Ethiopia live at the sharp end of the devastation caused by drought, food insecurity, vulnerable livelihoods and inter-communal conflict. Through the Austrian government funded Integrated Peacebuilding, Development and Humanitarian Efforts (IPDHE) programme, youth network members have been facilitating and leading dialogues with young people to understand the links between their limited livelihood opportunities, their lack of engagement in effective decision-making mechanisms, and the cycle of conflict in their communities. VSO volunteers have recommended livelihood interventions that could reduce the conflict in this region. They are also amplifying the voices of youth in conflict affected areas in national advocacy platforms and in their engagement with government decision makers on health, education and livelihoods.



Women Empowerment Movement - Rural Improvement Clubs (WEMRIC) members attend an interface meeting with VSO staff from the UK, in Mindanao, Philippines.

©VSO/Lisa Mariea David

SIERRA LEONE: ADVOCATING FOR INCLUSION, TRANSFORMING EDUCATION

In Sierra Leone, youth network members have been leading the integration of the government's Radical Inclusion Education Policy that aims to ensure inclusive access and participation of the most marginalised communities in the education system. Through participatory research to look at the inclusivity and effectiveness of the policy towards PWD and engagement with communities, they are raising awareness of the policy and helping to make it effective in practice. They have organised meetings with local authorities and service providers to facilitate engagement with primary actors and have led awareness raising campaigns within communities to build wider understanding of the policy itself.

CAMBODIA: MOBILISING FOR POLICY CHANGE, TACKLING ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

In Cambodia, VSO-supported youth volunteers are mobilising to effect change at the district policy level, advocating for improved waste management

plans and getting local authorities to commit to those plans. Their tireless efforts and unwavering dedication are reshaping policy landscapes and driving tangible impact in communities. From grassroots activism to policy advocacy, they're proving that youth voices are not just heard; they're heeded.

SUSTAINING MOMENTUM: A JOURNEY OF LIFELONG ENGAGEMENT

For many youth volunteers, joining a youth network is just the beginning of a lifelong journey of active citizenship. In Myanmar, research conducted by VSO showcases that over 60% of volunteers continue to be engaged as active citizens in their communities, promoting environmental protection initiatives, and fostering community resilience. In volatile contexts like Myanmar, their enduring commitment underscores the sustainability of this investment in young people and the transformative power of youth engagement in building more resilient societies.



A peace committee meeting. The border region of Ethiopia and Kenya is ravaged by armed conflict due to persistent drought and famine. The IPDHE project aims to empower local communities to identify the underlying problems that cause conflict and help them develop an action plan to solve these problems and support them in its implementation.

©VSO/Paul Wambungu

Raising the Bar:

Advancing the Volunteering for Development Standard

The essence of volunteering has always been grounded in service, solidarity, and mutual benefit. But as the world becomes more connected, there's a growing need for a cohesive and standardised approach to volunteering, especially when it transcends borders.

The Global Volunteering Standard is a response to this need, aiming to harmonise the practices of Volunteer Involving Organisations across the globe. VSO is at the forefront of advocating for and implementing the Global Volunteering Standard. With our extensive experience in facilitating impactful volunteer work, we've played a pivotal role in its development, its dissemination and its operationalisation. So far, 90 organisations in 19 countries have adopted the Global Volunteering Standard. Our research shows that organisations are making particularly good progress in managing volunteers and designing and planning successful volunteering interventions and measuring impact. Despite this progress, we know there's more work to be done beyond just adopting the Standard. Deeper policy discussions are needed to truly harness the momentum volunteering for development is gaining. Over the last year, we have been targeting governments at national and sub-national level, as well as NGOs to raise awareness of the crucial role of the Standard in responsible development. We have been organising training sessions and providing technical support through volunteers specialising in Volunteering for Development, to shape policies that support volunteering.

AFRICAN UNION

Our partnership with the African Union (AU) is a prime example of our commitment to embedding the Standard globally. Together, we've established a Volunteer Linkage Platform and formulated volunteering policies within AU Member States. Our latest Review Paper on the Uptake of the Global Volunteering Standard explores

volunteering practices and the adoption of the Global Volunteering Standard across both the AU and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) regions. It sheds lights on how we can enhance the quality, impact and sustainability of volunteer efforts worldwide. For ASEAN nations, the Global Volunteering Standard presents a transformative opportunity drawing on the rich experiences and lessons learned from the AU. By adapting the Global Volunteering Standard to local contexts, engaging governments and policymakers, fostering partnerships, and focusing on capacity building and youth engagement, ASEAN countries can significantly enhance the quality, impact, and sustainability of their volunteer efforts. But it requires a collaborative approach, involving stakeholders from across the volunteer sector.

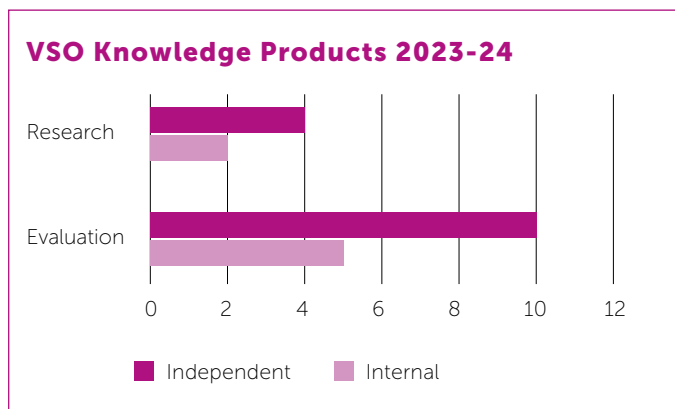
GLOBAL VOLUNTEERING STANDARD

The Global Volunteering Standard offers an opportunity not only to elevate volunteering in particular contexts but also to contribute to a global movement for more effective, impactful, and universally recognised volunteering practices. As countries navigate the challenges and opportunities of adopting the Global Volunteering Standard, they stand to benefit from a more sustainable approach to volunteering, ultimately contributing to broader development goals and fostering national, regional and global community and cooperation.

VSO's Knowledge and Thought Leadership in 2023-24

At VSO, our commitment to knowledge generation and thought leadership on our Volunteering for Development approach and methodology continues to be a driving force behind our learning, programme improvements, and external visibility.

Through the year, we produced a total of 39 knowledge products. These include 15 evaluations of single or multi-project initiatives, six thematic research reports, and 18 evaluative case studies from VSO projects.



Our case studies highlight the impactful work of VSO particularly in areas such as active citizenship and service provider accountability, primarily arising from the global UK government funded ACTIVE programme. Notably these case studies received technical assistance from student researchers at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

The thematic areas covered in our knowledge products align with VSO's Theory of Change. These include youth involvement in climate action, green jobs and employment, sexual and reproductive health, tackling gender-based violence, foundational education, agroecological farming and disability inclusion. They span all VSO's practice areas of Health, Education, and Livelihoods.

Our evaluations and case studies have captured both tangible outcomes, such as increased literacy and numeracy rates, improved access to public services in education and health, enhanced agricultural production, as well as increased youth employment, and income. They have also captured softer outcomes such as shifts in social norms, reductions in gender-based violence, empowerment of youth and women, disability inclusion, and promoting responsible and impactful volunteering practices.

KNOWLEDGE

VSO's thought leadership in volunteering for development has expanded with our knowledge products being used externally. These include a paper on the 'effectiveness of the Volunteering for Development methodology for the Sustainable Development Goals' presented and published in the [International Society for Third Sector Research](#), a VSO blog and presentation on [agroecology featured](#) at the first [Accelerating Agricultural Adaptation in Africa conference](#) in Nigeria, and a blog on VSO's Monitoring Impact for Learning and Empowerment methodology ([MILE](#)) published on the [Evaluation Exchange of University College London](#). Additionally, our research on global inequality in volunteering was shared on [FORUM](#), an international platform of volunteering organisations. Two knowledge products focusing on women's rights and gender issues were also presented at the [Women Deliver 2023](#) conference in Rwanda, attended by over 6,000 participants in-person and over 200,000 globally online.

Make Way

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights for all

VSO, in collaboration with five consortium partners, the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA NL), and over 50 collaborating partners, is implementing the Make Way programme in East and Southern Africa.

The programme's vision is to realise Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) for all. By applying an intersectional lens, we aim to identify and remove barriers that prevent marginalised youth from accessing sexual and reproductive health (SRH) information and services, and from exercising their SRHR.

Our ambition for Make Way for this year was for our lobby and advocacy efforts to go into "high gear". Throughout the year, we faced several challenges which made our work on SRHR more difficult than expected. We had a year of high inflation and opposition to SRHR. The cost of living rose everywhere, and in some contexts had the one-two punch of currency fluctuations and depreciations. We also saw the Anti-Homosexuality Bill pass into law in Uganda and politicians in other countries threatening similar legislation. An increase in attacks against LGBTQI+ persons emerged, with direct impact on some of our partners and the communities they serve. Nevertheless, we were able to accelerate our lobby and advocacy efforts and exponentially increase the number of related activities.

THE INTERSECTIONAL COMMUNITY SCORECARD

VSO brings its extensive experience in building

healthy communities and strengthening inclusive systems into the Make Way consortium. Our key contribution has been the development of the Intersectional Community Scorecard (ICSC). This social accountability tool empowers marginalised youth to engage with duty bearers to assess, monitor, and evaluate the Availability, Accessibility, Acceptability, and Quality (AAAQ) of SRH services in their communities. By focusing on social identities, such as gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and education, the ICSC challenges power dynamics and encourages marginalised individuals in taking a proactive stance towards the evaluation of government performance in SRH service delivery.

Thanks to the efforts of our Social Accountability volunteers, the ICSC has been piloted and implementation of the Make Way programme took place in all five participating countries (i.e., Kenya, Uganda, Zambia, Ethiopia, and Rwanda). Over 25 facilities have been reached, and more than 50 Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) have utilised the ICSC-generated evidence for advocacy, even beyond the programme's scope. In all districts where the ICSC was used to evaluate SRH services, a Joint Monitoring Committee was established. These committees, including both duty bearers and youth representatives, are set up to actively follow up on the implementation of the agreed actions plans. The goal of the action plans is to improve the SRH services for young people.

An example of the ICSC's impact is seen in Rwanda, where Learn Work Develop (LWD), a Make Way partner, combined their safe space model with the ICSC process. The LWD safe spaces target adolescent boys and girls, including teenage mothers. Facilitated by "Aunties" and "Elder Sisters" from their community, young people come together on a weekly basis for SRHR information,

“In total, over 350 marginalized youth were engaged, including married and unmarried young people, teen moms, LGBTQI+ persons, young sex workers, young people living with HIV, and young people with disabilities”

referrals to SRH services, peer support, and empowerment through a savings programme. The ICSC was used to allow these adolescents to articulate their SRHR concerns to duty bearers and jointly come up with solutions. Following the ICSC, Make Way partners hosted a national dialogue with duty bearers, which led to commitments to assign one younger Community Health Worker to each village to improve access to youth-friendly SRH services.

SEVEN DISTRICTS

Make Way in Zambia completed ICSC rollouts in seven districts (Samfya, Kitwe, Mansa, Zambezi, Lusaka, Chongwe, and Mufulira) in 2022 and repeated the exercise in these districts in 2023, but at different facilities. In total, over 350 marginalized youth were engaged, including married and unmarried young people, teen moms, LGBTQI+ persons, young sex workers, young people living with HIV, and young people with disabilities. The duty bearers included service providers from the facilities, religious leaders, representatives from the district councils, healthcare offices, and CSOs working in the various districts, as well as representatives of government offices, such as the Ministry of Health’s district healthcare offices. The issues the young people brought forward included discrimination against teenage mothers by midwives during delivery. A young, unmarried woman recalled the comment: “Why do you want contraceptives, you are not even married? You are the people who wreck other people’s homes!” Other issues were: unaffordable services, the lack of healthcare providers trained in sign language,

a lack of privacy and confidentiality due to open-plan facilities, and shortages of SRH commodities and medicine. The rollouts concluded with the development of actions plans to address the challenges and gaps the young people raised, including areas for advocacy, and with setting up the Joint Monitoring Committees. In one district, ramps were built immediately following the interface meeting. An unexpected result was that one of our partners continued to implement the ICSC with funds from another donor.

In order to capture learnings from the ICSC implementation, and strengthen the accountability and advocacy processes going forward, VSO and lead consortium partner Wemos initiated a research project. This implementation study focuses on four main themes: the tool’s effectiveness, whether the tool is truly intersectional, its uniqueness and differences compared to other scorecards, and the ease of adoption by other, smaller organisations.

MEANINGFUL YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Young people gained and claimed more space in Make Way in 2023-24. They led or co-led evidence gathering activities to assess and improve the quality of SRH services for marginalised youth. They also mobilised other young people, for example, to join safe spaces, but also to raise their collective voice toward duty bearers and hold them accountable.

Make Way has leveraged VSO's expertise to develop the meaningful youth engagement (MYE) strategy that ensures marginalised youth representation is present in various Make Way structures. In 2023-24, VSO continued to provide technical support to the five youth panels at the national level and the youth council at the regional and global level. These structures allow young people to influence decision-making processes within the programme while simultaneously shaping, enriching, and implementing the programme advocacy initiatives.

In December, our partner organisation United Disabled Persons Kenya (UDPK) and VSO hosted representatives of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Fifteen young people with disabilities shared their lived experiences and explained how the model of intersectionality has helped them challenge societal stigma and SRH related bias. They also shared a copy of a memo they submitted to the Ministry of Health which raised 24 issues and gaps in the current healthcare system in relation to young people with disabilities. Moreover, Make Way ensures that even the most marginalised youth have safe spaces to discuss SRHR topics openly with peers and trusted adults, empowering them to become SRHR champions. The University Medical Centre Groningen

performed a case study with VSO and LWD in Rwanda to gain a better understanding of how safe spaces are designed, implemented, and perceived by users and implementers within the context of SRHR.

CAPACITY STRENGTHENING ABOVE AND BEYOND

The Mid Term Review conducted in 2023 confirmed that collaborating partners in all contexts reported an increased knowledge of intersectionality, SRHR advocacy and SRHR issues, and of other related topics, such as budget analysis and religious discourse. Mutual capacity strengthening continues to be at the core of our activities. The Make Way tools have helped our alliance members to enter challenging spaces, understand power dynamics, and sharpen the issues they raise with government officials.

For example, in Ethiopia, VSO collaborated with the Federation of Ethiopian Associations for Persons with Disabilities to improve access to justice by women and girls with disabilities and to reduce Sexual and Gender-Based Violence. Over one hundred persons with disabilities and representatives from government offices and disability associations in Addis Ababa and Oromia region participated in the event. The



concept of intersectionality and the findings of the ICSC related to persons with disabilities were presented and discussed. In Uganda, a Leadership Retreat for 15 Members of Parliament focused on creating a deeper understanding of gender and SRHR-responsive budgeting. In Rwanda, VSO collaborated with Empower Rwanda and Health Development Initiative to train 50 healthcare providers from all of the healthcare centres in the Nyagatare District on improving their skills for providing quality SRH services and on increasing their knowledge of the legal and regulatory frameworks on SRHR in Rwanda.

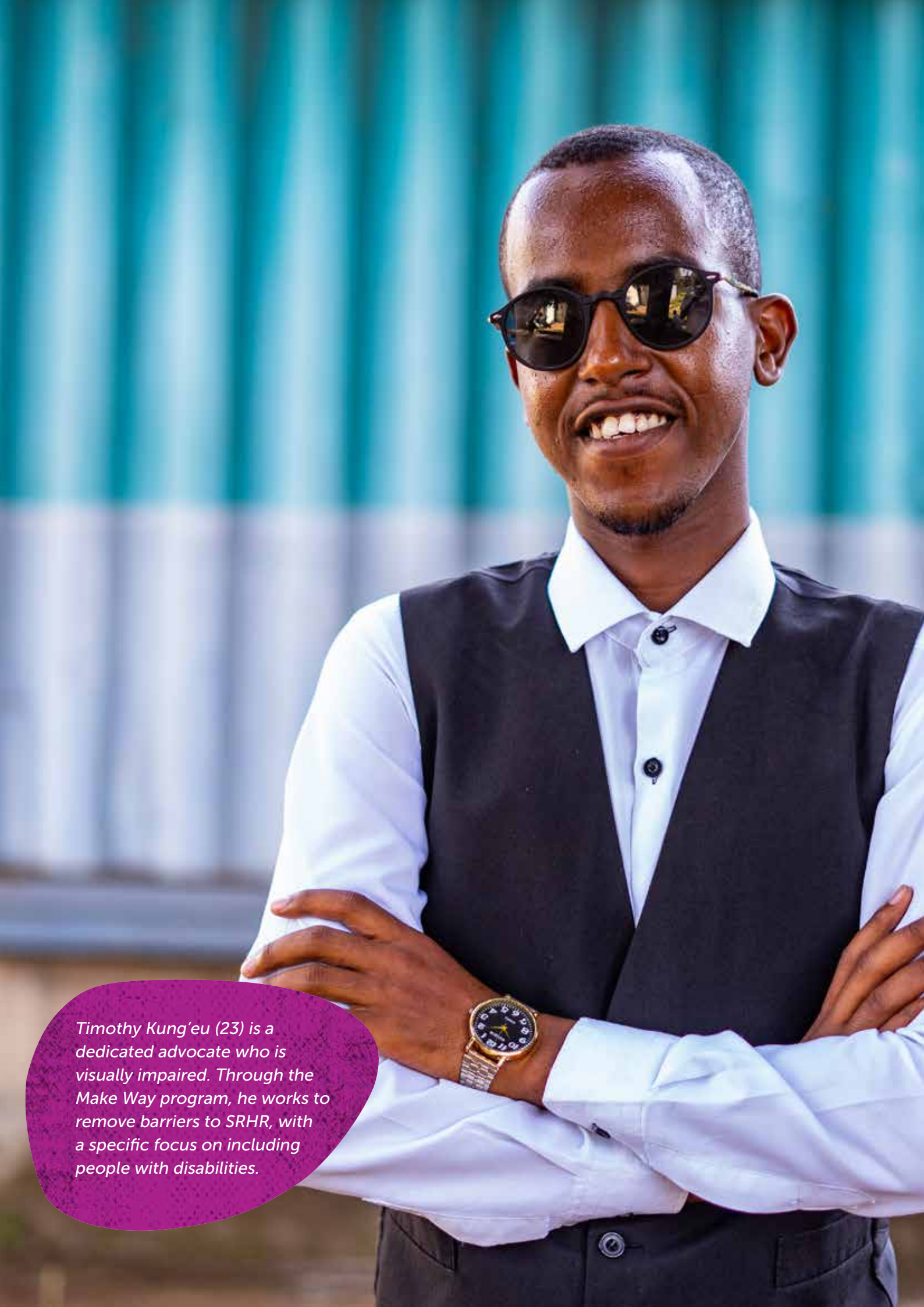
TRACKING INVESTMENTS

In Zambia, VSO conducted a Public Expenditure Tracking Survey (PETS) pilot exercise to track the budget for SRH service provisions at a healthcare facility. The pilot exercise provided the content for contextualising the PETS manual. Together with the Budget Analysis Checklist, there is now a more comprehensive set of tools for tracking investments in the SRHR of marginalised youth. In the Netherlands, a session on decolonising the

narrative on queerness(es) in Africa at the Shaping the Feminist Foreign Policy Conference (see also page 32) saw the active participation of African experts on this topic, including one of the Make Way youth panel members. The video that was produced after the conference is gaining interest from like-minded organisations and individuals who are eager to learn and collaborate on creating a counternarrative against the anti-rights and anti-gender movement.

Finally, VSO and several youth representatives took part in global conferences (such as Women Deliver 2023, the Partos Innovational Festival 2023, and the European Congress on Tropical Medicine and International Health (ECTMIH 2023) to promote SRHR for all, especially for the most marginalised who are often left behind.





Timothy Kung'eu (23) is a dedicated advocate who is visually impaired. Through the Make Way program, he works to remove barriers to SRHR, with a specific focus on including people with disabilities.

Challenge Fund for Youth Employment

A PROSPEROUS FUTURE FOR 230.000 YOUNG PEOPLE

The Challenge Fund for Youth Employment (CFYE) is a 7-year programme funded by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and managed by VSO Netherlands, Palladium and Randstad. Running from 2019-2026, the fund supports private sector initiatives in Africa and the Middle East working towards scalable solutions to youth unemployment. The Fund aims to create a prosperous future for over 230,000 for young women and men by supporting the private sector to implement accessible and localised youth employment initiatives.

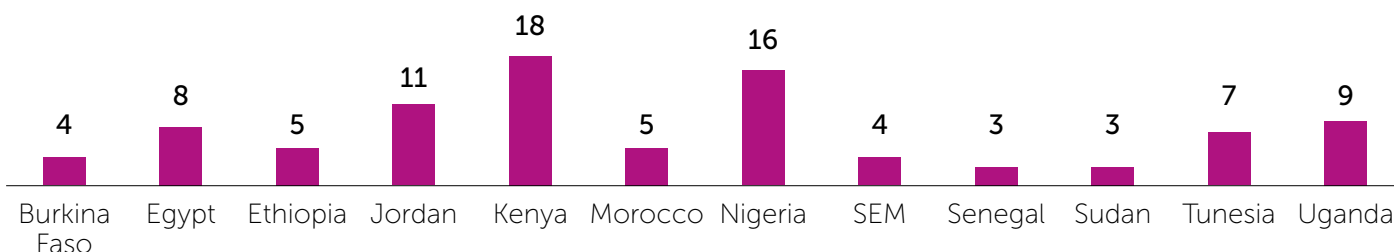
These initiatives offer youth, particularly young women, opportunities for decent work that delivers better prospects for personal development, is productive, and offers a stable income, social protection, and safe working conditions.

RESULTS 2023-24

In 2023, CFYE concluded the launch of a series of country-specific and thematic (regional) Calls for Solutions to identify promising business cases for youth employment. From these calls, CFYE has selected and is currently supporting a portfolio of 93 unique projects operated by implementing partners in 11 countries (i.e., Uganda, Nigeria, Egypt, Kenya, Jordan, Sudan, Morocco, Tunisia, Burkina Faso, Senegal, and Ethiopia) to deliver projects that enable young people to access new or better jobs. In addition to the 93 currently active projects, CFYE signed contracts with an additional 14 partners with whom the collaboration has already ended. In total, these 107 projects have been awarded a combined amount of € 85 million and have committed € 159 million in co-funding towards CFYE's goal.

2023 marked a shift in focus for CFYE, from launching calls and selecting proposals to implementation, impact creation, and catalysation. The final Call for Solutions (Call 6) was launched in 2023 in Egypt, Senegal, Morocco, Nigeria, and Kenya. At the same time, the first group of projects completed activities and began wrapping up in Uganda.

NUMBER OF ACTIVE PROJECTS PER COUNTRY



The current portfolio, consisting of 93 projects by Implementing Partners (IPs), aims to generate 241,662 jobs for young people by the end of the programme in 2026, of which 144,346 jobs will be for women. The number of IPs and planned jobs will further increase with the addition of projects from Call 6 to the portfolio.

Thus far, a total of 56,829 jobs have been generated for young people, 28,377 of which are for young women (50%). In addition to the jobs for youth, nearly 19,000 jobs have been generated for individuals aged 36 or older, who fall outside CFYE's target group, and are not included in the programme goal.

GREEN JOBS

With a growing number of green jobs in the portfolio and an increasing interest in the topic of green economy amongst stakeholders, supporting the creation of green jobs became a key focus within CFYE on both a portfolio and learning agenda level. According to CFYE's definition of green jobs, IPs and jobs were categorised as green if they help to reduce negative environmental impacts, ultimately leading to environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable enterprises and economies. This allows for the monitoring of the prevalence of green jobs in the portfolio and exploration of learning questions.

In 2023, CFYE classified 24 implementing partners in its portfolio as green (Calls 1 to 5 and Thematic Call). Together, these IPs aim to generate 64,343 green jobs by the end of the project. So far, they have reported 13,815 green jobs (21% of all jobs to date). This number is expected to increase with the addition of Call 6 IPs to the portfolio, given the call's specific focus on green jobs.

HOW JAMES IS IMPACTING COMMUNITIES THROUGH AGGREGATION:

Inspired by the idea of creating a cleaner and safer environment, James decided to embark on a journey to transform the waste picking sector. He understood that single-use plastics not only posed environmental challenges, but also had negative social implications, especially for waste pickers in Kenya.

Through the collaboration with Mr Green Africa (MGA), a business in Kenya that, with CFYE's support, aims to create and improve more than 4,000 jobs for young people, James was empowered as an agent.

One of the major hurdles in Kenya's waste and recycling sector is that urban waste is collected by vulnerable waste pickers, who not only lack basic personal protective equipment (PPE), skills, or tools, also face ever-changing, non-transparent



“One of the major hurdles in Kenya’s waste and recycling sector is that urban waste is collected by vulnerable waste pickers, who not only lack basic personal protective equipment (PPE), skills, or tools, also face ever-changing, non-transparent prices, resulting in low and unstable incomes”

prices, resulting in low and unstable incomes and exclusion from social, financial, and healthcare services. Through the security and assistance provided by MGA, James helped young mothers by providing them with the means to pay for their children’s school fees. He recognised the importance of “Kazi Bora” (better jobs) to improve their quality of life and make their livelihoods more affordable. This is a sentiment shared by MGA, whose integrated business model aims not only to deliver high quality products, but also to create long-term, decent, and attractive jobs, particularly for young women and men.

With the support of CFYE, MGA is working to establish a professional, fair, and inclusive plastic recycling ecosystem in Kenya, and aims to formalise relationships with informal waste pickers. In addition, MGA expects to transform the working conditions and livelihoods of more than 4,000 young individuals, with more than half of these opportunities dedicated to young women.

GREEN JOB CREATION

To gain a better understanding of green jobs in the CFYE portfolio, CFYE conducted research to explore the different types and characteristics of jobs, which helped to classify and monitor the different kinds of green jobs in the CFYE portfolio. Nevertheless, the substantial variety of green job types, particularly those emerging within informal sectors, present significant challenges in ensuring job quality.

Another challenge faced by IPs creating green jobs is that these often emerge in sectors that are traditionally less attractive to young people, such as agriculture or waste management. In order to

gain more insights into what job quality in green jobs means for IPs and young people, CFYE carried out research in the waste and recycling sector in Kenya.

GREEN JOBS IN THE WASTE AND RECYCLING SECTOR

Seeing that IPs in the waste and recycling sector in Kenya were struggling with defining and measuring job quality, CFYE decided to focus on this within the Green Job Learning Agenda.

In 2023, we collaborated with INCLUDE to gain a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities for IPs working in the waste and recycling sector. INCLUDE researched the business perspective on job quality through interviews with IPs and other actors active in the sector in Kenya. The study highlighted barriers to and drivers of job creation in the waste and recycling sector, and recommended different pathways towards decent employment.

Meanwhile, youth-led research was conducted by VSO to gain more insights into youth perspectives on jobs and job quality in the plastic waste and recycling sector. Youth Experts collected data from young people working in the sector and interviewed various other stakeholders. This study found that although there are areas for improvement in terms of job quality, young people generally expressed satisfaction in their roles and pride.

Graph 6. Number of Green IPs per country and their results and targets.

Country	No of Ips	Target	Result
Algeria	1	1,664	
Burkina Faso	2	3,258	
Egypt	1	5,426	
Ethiopia	3	4,704	844
Kenya	7	13,977	7,137
Mali	1	636	
Morocco	1	1,248	
Nigeria	5	15,405	928
Senegal	3	1,066	116
Sudan	1	112	94
Tunisia	4	4,389	285
Uganda	6	12,460	4,411
Grand Total	35	64,345	13,815

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE (TA)

In 2023, a strategy for Standardised TA Packages was developed for the most often requested TA topics, or strategic thematic areas that are critical for the Fund's objectives, such as financial management, basic policies and codes, curriculum and training development, quality work, and gender.

CFYE takes a value-for-money approach by delivering TA to groups of IPs, and where possible, online.

1. For the SEM call, overall targets are contractually agreed with CFYE at a project (IP) level, and not divided per country of operation. The expected allocation of jobs per country shown here are based on IP-provided estimates as of November 2023, reflecting current investment pipelines and plans. The final distribution of jobs per country is contingent upon the number of deals done per country, sector and business model, and is subject to change over time depending on changing dynamics and opportunities. For the purpose of aggregating CFYE data per country, we have shown the SEM targets as results in country of operation of the SEM IPs.

SOCIAL IMPACT TA: GENDER DESIGN SPRINTS

Five IPs contributing to digital jobs in Nigeria faced challenges in recruiting and retaining women in the jobs they were promoting. CFYE provided Human Centred Design support to these IPs.

This TA was implemented with Proportion using a 5-day programme to help IPs understand the challenges women have in taking digital jobs, and to design usable solutions for them. IPs that participated in this TA adapted their delivery strategy accordingly:

"We were able to brainstorm ideas and draw inspiration from mediums we least expected. At the end of the design sprint, we had come up with a solution that speaks to all the issues we currently encounter and were able to put together a prototype for our proposed solution."





Josephine Mwende (33) advocates for the inclusion of people with disabilities in sexual and reproductive health rights in Kenya. Having faced rejection from hospitals during childbirth, she is committed to ensuring SRHR access for all through the Make Way program.

From Waste to Work

From Waste to Work, funded by the IKEA Foundation and implemented in collaboration with Taka Taka Solutions and ICDI, addresses the environmental and social issues related to plastic pollution and waste management in Kenya.

It emphasises the disproportionate impact of environmental degradation on vulnerable communities, particularly youth engaged in waste picking. The project aims to empower these youth, referred to as “green entrepreneurs,” by providing them with support to organise, develop leadership skills, and establish sustainable businesses in waste recovery and value addition.

In 2023-24, From Waste to Work made significant strides in engaging key stakeholders, including local authorities and civil societies, to address waste challenges. Efforts to identify primary actors and foster collaboration have been fruitful, leading to the establishment of Community Buyback Centres (CBBs) and capacity-building initiatives. Additionally, to tackle challenges such as low female participation, the project has adapted and designed strong gender empowerment interventions.

MOVING FORWARD

Over the past year, we have successfully invested in capacity building and waste management training, unlocking new revenue streams for participants. Partnerships with county governments have been vital, though ongoing challenges include compliance issues and permit acquisition delays.

Moving forward, emphasis on inclusive participation, intergenerational learning, and early engagement with authorities is crucial. Improving communication, data sharing, and sustainability considerations are essential for long-term impact. The project demonstrates promising waste management and community empowerment, necessitating ongoing adaptation and collaboration among stakeholders.

KEY SUCCESS FACTORS:

- **Stakeholder Engagement:**

Collaborative efforts with private sector, local authorities, and civil societies have been instrumental.

- **Capacity Building:**

Training initiatives have equipped primary actors with essential skills and revealed new revenue streams.

- **Safety Measures:**

Providing Personal Protective Equipment has enhanced safety and morale among participants.

CHALLENGES FACED:

- **Timeline Delays:**

More time is needed for learning and project set-up.

- **Gender Inclusivity:**

Efforts to involve women face obstacles due to industry dynamics and societal factors.

- **Market Challenges:**

Young green entrepreneurs encounter difficulties in the off-take market, such as low prices and irregular collections.



LESSONS LEARNED:

- **Inclusivity:**

Inclusion of older participants and intensified efforts for gender empowerment are crucial for sustainability.

- **Improved Planning:**

Advanced communication and co-creation of training content are essential for effective implementation.

- **Focus Areas:**

An increased focus on dumpsite youths and sustainability considerations beyond profitability is necessary for long-term success.

PARTNERSHIP PERSPECTIVES:

- **Effective Communication:**

Enhanced communication pathways among consortium members have facilitated joint planning.

- **Government Engagement:**

Collaboration with local authorities has been crucial for accessing resources and gaining community acceptance.

- **Trust Building:**

Building trust and ownership among primary actors is essential for project success.

- **The project shows**

promise in waste management and community empowerment, and ongoing adaptation and collaboration among stakeholders are set up to ensure long term success.

Results From Waste to Work 2023-24

Figures (based on
KPIs) until March 2024
(for the period April
2023 to March 2024)



A TOTAL OF 2,696

(1,498 males and 1,198 females)
were mobilised into the From
Waste To Work program,

3%

of which a total of 97
individuals identified
themselves as persons
with disabilities



128 YOUTH

BUSINESS CLUBS

ARE PROVIDING PLATFORMS

FOR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT,

SOCIAL AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT,

AND STRATEGIC ALLIANCES



3,326.66 TONS

OF WASTE COLLECTED

IN THE YEAR 2023-24

71% of the firms

in the project implement policies or practices related to
child labor and any form of harassment and violence



127 GREEN

YOUTH-LED START-UPS WHO HAVE INCREASED ENTREPRENEURIAL AND TECHNICAL SKILLS AS A RESULT OF THE TRAINING



98%

of the Youth Business Clubs have enhanced collection and recovery capacities



98%

of the youth business club members have indicated improved assets, agency and leadership skills



95

OF THE YOUTH BUSINESS CLUB MEMBERS ARE PARTICIPATING IN NETWORKING AND LINKING PLATFORMS



15

COMMUNITY BUYBACK CENTRES ESTABLISHED



3

BUY BACK CENTERS ESTABLISHED BY TAKA TAKA SOLUTIONS

PAULINE'S STORY: HOPE AMIDST CHALLENGES

"Sometimes we can't make ends meet and we sleep hungry. That puts me in a difficult position as a woman waste picker. The only option is to sell myself, and I don't want that."

Pauline, From Waste to Work project, Nairobi

LIFE IN KIBERA

Pauline lives in a tent on the dumpsite in Kibera, Nairobi. Life as a waste picker is extremely challenging, with no access to clean water, sanitation, or sanitary pads. *"We often share pads with friends or find ones in the garbage that are fairly clean."*

TRAINING AND HOPE

For the past two weeks, Pauline has received training from VSO through the From Waste to Work project, learning new skills and feeling hopeful for change. The project supports young people (ages 18–35) in challenging situations, helping them create livelihoods through waste picking initiatives. Training includes sorting and recycling rubbish, financial literacy, life skills, and entrepreneurship.

PERSONAL JOURNEY

Pauline was born in Turkana in 1990. After becoming a mother in 2008 and losing her father, her husband took their son to live with his mother. Now in Nairobi with a new husband, also a waste picker, Pauline supports her child with the money she earns.

DAILY LIFE

Pauline's typical day involves sorting waste from early morning until she gets paid in the evening. Often hungry, she also does unskilled labor like laundry services, sometimes paid with a meal instead of money.

LIVING CONDITIONS

Living on the dumpsite, Pauline hopes VSO will

help her secure decent housing. Without access to water or toilets, the conditions are unhealthy, leading to infections and other health issues.

GOVERNMENT CHALLENGES

Pauline has faced harassment from government officials and has had to pay to retrieve seized carts. Despite these challenges, the support from VSO has been significant.

SUPPORT FROM VSO

VSO has provided food, protective gear, and better prices for waste products. They've also given training on finance, mental health, and life skills, which Pauline finds invaluable. She hopes to continue these sessions to further improve her situation.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

Before the project, waste pickers were treated with disrespect. With PPE from VSO, they now look like a legitimate business, gaining respect and equal opportunities.

FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

"My biggest desire for the future is to get a house. Then I can organize myself, open a business, and support my family and child. I'm optimistic this will happen with VSO's help."



KEVIN'S STORY: TRANSFORMING LIVES THROUGH WASTE MANAGEMENT

Kevin, a procurement graduate, couldn't find a job and turned to waste picking with two friends to make ends meet. With support from VSO's "From Waste to Work" project, Kevin formalized and expanded his waste management group, which now sustains 20 members and their families.

The project, funded by the IKEA Foundation, helps young people in challenging situations by providing training in waste sorting, recycling, financial literacy, and entrepreneurship. It also connects waste pickers with genuine buyers, ensuring fair prices for recyclables.

Kevin, inspired by the lack of job opportunities and a desire to avoid illegal activities, founded his waste collection group, which has grown significantly. The group's work involves solid waste management, environmental awareness campaigns, and community engagement. Training sessions have empowered Kevin and his group with skills in finance, group formation, and personal protective equipment usage. They now work professionally, increasing their income and community recognition.

The project has also fostered inclusivity, attracting women and people with special needs. Kevin's group engages in community programs, expanding their reach from 15 to 450 households.

FUTURE GOALS

Kevin's future goals include starting a waste management company with a material recovery facility, adding value to collected recyclables, and employing more youths. He hopes for further support to obtain necessary licenses and compete for larger waste management contracts. In summary, VSO's project has transformed Kevin's view on waste management, turning it into a sustainable livelihood that benefits the community and the environment.



COLLECTIVE ACTION FOR RIGHTS REALISATION

Tanzania is one of Africa's most mineral-rich countries, with a variety of industrial minerals, as well as gemstones. These include iron ore, soda ash, coal, clay soil, uranium, gold, diamond, and Tanzanite. Despite this mineral wealth, the economic and social development of the country is slow. Income from mining operations is distributed very unevenly, with poverty still a major challenge amongst communities in areas of the mining operations. 50% of Tanzania's export value comes from the mining sector, and 33% increase in mining revenue is expected in the coming years.

In the run for critical minerals for the future green transition, the country has attracted new foreign direct investment, and local investment has surpassed \$ 1 billion. This brings new challenges for the environment and the rights of local communities. This learning brief can serve as guidance for anyone interested in ensuring that human and environmental rights are respected within the extractive industry.

CHALLENGES FOR COMMUNITIES

In the Collective Action for Rights Realisation in Extractive Industry (CLARITY) project (2021-2023), VSO, together with local partner organisations – Lawyers Environmental Action Team (LEAT) and the Tanzanian Women Chamber of Commerce – and with support from the European Union, addressed the challenges that communities face in the gold mining regions of Geita and Mara. We supported 4,000 people in holding the mining industry accountable, advocated for the implementation of policies that protect and support local communities, reported rights abuses and environmental damages through citizen led monitoring, and supported marginalised groups in benefiting from the sector through income generation assistance.

FROM THE EVALUATION REPORT

"The CLARITY project has met its targets effectively, as highlighted by the end-line survey. It significantly impacted marginalised groups, with 95% acknowledging its role in creating networks and organisations for youth, women, and PWDs. Furthermore, 89% confirmed its contribution to establishing economic activities.

Through CLARITY's Business development services (BDS), SMEs realised notable improvements in working conditions, prioritising health and safety, establishing proper contracts, fair working hours, gender-inclusive recruitment, and protecting vulnerable groups. This resulted in a significant income growth of SMEs, increasing from 20% to 67% since the project's initiation. Volunteers also saw a positive shift in perception, feeling more valued by the community for their contributions toward realising rights.

Human Rights: local CSOs engaged through Clarity in educating miners on responsible waste disposal to prevent environmental hazards, promoting tree planting for environmental conservation, and facilitating conflict resolution in land and marriage disputes. They supported the communities in issues around inheritance, mining, gender-based violence, and child labour."

The final external evaluation shows that CLARITY's unique achievement is the interconnected web of initiatives, support structures, and relationships it has managed to broker, each playing a specific role in solving community-identified problems. While they do manage to address community problems as a system, on their own, they would be unable to do so fully.

ESSENTIAL PARTNERS

These dialogues culminated in the activation and improved work of the environmental management committees at village levels, successful tree planting campaigns, enhanced equality, reduced child labour, and improved safety at mining sites. Importantly, CSOs are expected to advance the multi-stakeholders' agenda after the project phases out.

Local CSOs are essential partners for the identification of harmful practices, understanding ethical mining practice, national resource policies, due diligence mechanisms, and social accountability techniques. These CSOs provided legal advice to community members as well as establish links with state-based judicial institutions and alternative dispute resolutions mechanisms. They linked survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) to gender desks, and raised public awareness on the proper channels for reporting GBV cases and the appellate authorities involved. This resulted in legally empowered communities and improved access to justice, especially by the marginalised groups.

CITIZEN-LED

The CSOs organized citizen-led monitoring on issues such as land rights, the right to a clean and safe environment, and scrutinizing community support projects from mining companies, which is a strong tool for increasing accountability in the sector. Pictures of damaged houses, pollution or land grabbing support evidence-based advocacy.

Through community radio initiatives like STORM FM and community theatre, 10,000 community members, including women, youth, and people with disabilities, were educated on human rights,

The Geita Women Mining Association (GEWOMA) has 3,000 members. GEWOMA was established seven years ago as a women's wing of the Geita Mining Association. GEWOMA is member of the national Tanzania Women Miners Association (TAWOMA).

Gold mining associations were established by the government in the 1990s to support small-scale mining in Tanzania. At first, the associations were funded by the government. Now, the associations are now only funded by their members, who are mine owners. These are mostly men, as women usually do not have their own mines. GEWOMA was established to strengthen the voice of women in mining, as women are often discriminated and victims of violence and harassment. They had a membership fee, but as not many could afford it, it was abolished.

natural resource conservation, and decent work in the extractive industry.

These CSOs also actively participated in providing legal aid clinics and collaborated with Plan International to establish human rights clubs in schools, specifically addressing gender based violence.

NATIONAL SUPPORT TO WOMEN MINERS

As many women in Tanzania do not have the means to invest in gold mining, the government recently issued 300 licences to women's mining groups. GEWOMA received 15 mining licences for 15 groups of women. They also received small mining equipment. GEWOMA is the owner of the licences and must pay for the annual extension of the licences. When the mine is operating, this annual fee can be earned in two months. The areas are not yet operating, as the government will research the ground first to see how much gold is there.

Some women miners' associations are funded by donors. GEWOMA is not. Women become members of GEWOMA because their voice is stronger as a group, and because of the new mining licences.

CLARITY SUPPORTING GEWOMA

The programme has supported GEWOMA in writing a strategic plan. As a result of this, GEWOMA was selected by the Regional Commission for the 15 licences. CLARITY's trainings in leadership and dealing with GBV helped these women to stand up against harassment and land grabbing.

There is a myth that women cannot go up hill to the mine during their period because the gold will disappear. This myth is now being debunked.

As many women cannot live from mining alone, they are also happy with CLARITY's support in other businesses, like vegetable growing and bee keeping.

TRAINING PARALEGALS

Together with LEAT, Himiza trained paralegals to support people in the community facing problems with large scale mining. Through community monitoring, pictures and stories are recorded on land evictions, houses damaged by mining blasts, land degradation, pollution, mining in nature reserves, companies not warning people in advance when blasts are used, and corruption in the grievance systems. A public road around the MNGM/Barrick mine is closed after 6:00 p.m. to

SILAS NYAGALA – COORDINATOR HIMIZA SOCIAL JUSTICE

Silas is a lawyer and legal aid advisor at Himiza Social Justice, one of the implementing partners for CLARITY. He has worked for the organisation since 2016. As he comes from a small scale mining family, he is very motivated to support victims of the large mining companies. As with many Tanzanians, he is critical about the way the government handles the gold mining industry. For example, the use of mercury for gold mining is forbidden because of the damage it does to people's health as well as the environment. While large scale miners have means to use alternatives, small scale miners still use mercury, which is for sale in shops in the mining areas. During the CLARITY meeting, a government official claimed that the government is creating a lot of awareness about the health hazards of using mercury, and that figures show that there is a decline in the use of mercury. Silas responded that the government is also still allowing the import of mercury, which is in contradiction to their policies.

prevent intruders. People coming home from work have to make large detours. If somebody tries to pass the road, Tanzanian police use violence to keep people away. There is also a list of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) projects by large mining companies supporting surrounding communities that are seen as window dressings. For example, a school built by a mining company was of very low quality despite a high budget. Another school for 800 pupils was destroyed because the land was sold to the mining company. Three years after, a new school has still not been built.

Complaints are recorded and directed to those responsible and shared with local leaders. Silas and his team follow up on cases and discuss them at multi-stakeholder platforms.

“
Through CLARITY’s Business development services (BDS), SMEs realised notable improvements in working conditions, prioritising health and safety, establishing proper contracts, fair working hours, gender-inclusive recruitment, and protecting vulnerable groups.”



Integrating peacebuilding, development, and humanitarian efforts (IPDHE) on the Ethiopia-Kenya border

The Integrated Peacebuilding, Development, and Humanitarian Efforts project (2022-2024) addresses the interconnected links between humanitarian aid, development and peace; also known as the Triple Nexus approach. Funded by the Austrian Development Cooperation, we aim to contribute to a foundation for stability and resilience on the Ethiopia-Kenya border area, which will ensure that long-term sustainable development and poverty reduction is possible.

FRAMEWORK:

Beneficiaries: 4 districts, 157,000 people.

Direct targets: 43 indigenous institutions, 20 Peace committees and 20 Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) committees, 15 local civil society organisations, 120 government officials, community leaders, and 4,000 community members, especially women, youth, and people with disabilities.

Years of drought in the area was followed by heavy rains. Many households were significantly affected by floods, leading to displacement and increased poverty. In December, food consumption was at an emergency level across Ethiopia, with one out of six of the 120 million population depending on food aid. In the project area, 14.9% of children below age 5 were at risk of malnutrition.

The war in Ukraine has also had a major impact on Ethiopia and Kenya, as it drives up prices of essential commodities such as food, fuel, and fertilizer. Mounting inflation is a serious concern. It hits the most vulnerable communities, with more people falling into the 'poor of the poor' level, which can only be handled through direct support. In Kenya, the introduction of new levies and the removal of subsidies on consumables led to

RESULTS 2023-24

Together with our local partner organisations – Horn of Africa Development Initiative (Kenya) and The Centre for Development and Capacity Building (Ethiopia) – we support 21 communities on the Ethiopia Kenya border to improve their lives in a way they choose for themselves. All community action plans are coordinated by local volunteers, and we are very keen to include many different groups to ensure that a range of perspectives are heard and that all community members are involved, including women and people with disabilities. Local governments are also included in the action plans, as local governments are also supported when responding to the needs of the communities they serve.

skyrocketing prices of goods and services. This was made worse by hampered production of food due to erratic weather patterns.

INCLUSION

The project team worked hard to include women and people with disabilities in activities. All communities work with DRR committees and Peace committees. These committees are central partners in the project. They prepare people for disasters like extreme droughts or floods, and support them to build resilience. These committees are also available, when needed, to discuss security situations and how to prevent tensions. During the formation or re establishment of these committees, there was a strong push to include women and people with disabilities in the membership.

Rufo Qalla from Waye *"I always wanted to do something in my community that strives for peace. Even the word 'peace' feels heavy to me. If there is no peace, there is no life. When there is peace, I can go everywhere, and I can do everything. It is important, especially for women, because they suffer the most during conflicts. Maybe she is pregnant, or she has lots of children. She cannot leave her children and go. That's why the peace trainings are most important for the women."*

Haway (47) lives with her husband, four daughters, and eight sons in the Ethiopia Kenya border region. Haway and her family had to flee their home several times because of flooding and conflicts between tribes. When she sees a sign of rain near the Ethiopian mountain, she cannot sleep that night, as she knows there will be a flood. One

time, her house was destroyed by a flood and the water took their belongings like food, utensils and clothes. They slept hungry that night.

Since the IPDHE project, Haway is a member of the DRR Committee in her community. She and the other members have received training on various topics including drought, flooding, conflict, and peaceful co-existing in communities. With the DRR Committee, Haway helps her community to prepare for flooding and drought, and warns them when a flood is coming. The DRR Committee also advocates for peace building amongst the communities, working together with the Peace committees.

"In the DRR Committee, we have learned to get along with each other and to live as a united community. This has reduced conflict. We now live in a peaceful environment. We are even on good terms with the pastoralists. We invite each other to social activities, such as weddings and funerals. We can borrow something from each other. Our livestock can cross to the other side of pasture and come back. Even their livestock comes to our side."

"Previously, women were not included in any decision making meetings, but now, women have a say. They can let their voices be heard. When we were forming the DRR Committee, the project gave guidelines to include women and youth. As a result, the elders decided to include women. So, in our local community, the number of women in the committee is high."

Haway next to her new flood resistant storage and amongst her new friends from different ethnicities.



COMMUNITY ACTION PLANNING

Mohammed from Gomo Godoloni

Godoloni is the only breadwinner in his family. This is difficult because of his disability. He lost his livestock during last year's drought, which was his main livelihood. He is actively participating in the project since June 2023. In this picture, he presents his group activity on community led vulnerability risk assessment and action planning. This is a process where IPDHE brings communities together to identify their risks and shocks, and devise mitigating strategies own their own. Mohammed was also supported with his livelihood activities.

With these plans, the communities set priorities for the support they think is most pressing. This can change per community, but common needs in community action plans include water and pasture management, alternative and climate resistant livelihood options, re forestation, improved early warning systems, humanitarian support for the most in need, and women's voice in decision making.

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Supporting social cohesion in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

Bangladesh is home to around one million Rohingya refugees, most of whom fled for their lives from Myanmar over the past years. The country set an admirable example of solidarity with the refugees despite its resource constraints, especially in the Cox's Bazar region, where most refugees are located. However, in the host communities, there is a noticeable shift from this rather unconditional solidarity to an anti-refugee sentiment. To address these tensions, supporting the livelihoods of youth and women in host communities, and fostering peaceful co existence, are key.

The Youth and Women Empowerment through Skill Development and Social Enterprise programme (2022-2025) has two objectives: for young people and women to have higher incomes through decent jobs or entrepreneurship, and to promote social cohesion by encouraging youth to volunteer in improving their communities.

YOUTH GROUPS

The project is now fully on track. Together with our French partner, ACF, youth and women's groups are established and trained. Youth groups have already become very active in their communities. Some activities are supported by the programme, others are organized on their own initiatives. The youth groups choose their own priorities based on the needs in their communities. This can be linking poor families to safety-net support from the local government, organising eye camps and free treatments together with a hospital, free cattle vaccinations, planting trees, raising awareness on climate change, advocating against drug abuse or early marriage, or raising awareness on hygiene, maternal and child healthcare and nutrition. At this stage of the project implementation, we have reached a total of 845 primary actors, 545 of whom are youth club members, and 300 are

self-help and mothers' groups. Of the total 845 people, 513 are female and 332 male. We have also reached 36 people living with a disability. With regard to the number of youth receiving vocational training, we have exceeded the planned number of 430 and reached a total of 476.

A specific focus of the programme is on women. We strive to have many girls and women in leadership positions in the youth groups, and to support women and girls in livelihood trainings. For 300 women, mother's groups were established in which they are supported and support each other in income generation. Social enterprises, as umbrella organisations of these mother's groups, have been established, trained and started functioning. All mothers have been trained in homestead gardening and nutrition, and received a start-up capital to establish their own kitchen garden, and/or poultry or fish farm. The groups function as saving and loans groups, where all start-up capital is saved for the moment they need specific funding. All women are also trained in basic business skills, the use of savings and loans, and the roles and responsibilities of being member of support groups. From each group, two women are selected to be delegates in the social enterprise; the umbrella organisation that supports all self-help groups. The name they have chosen for the social enterprise is Ukota Nari Unnayan Forum (United Women Development Forum).

Some adaptations were made to the originally planned trainings. It was difficult to engage youth for the planned skills training and internships, as the education level in the region is low, making the selection of youth for the skills training challenging as this requires certain literacy and numeracy skills. Other youth gave up on trainings, as they did not feel confident to start their own business. In this region, another complicating factor is that it is easy to earn money from fishing or receive hand-outs

from non-governmental organisations, which also impacts motivation. Lastly, there is less demand for some skills than we initially expected during the development of the programme. These challenges resulted in a redefinition of the skills training part of the programme. For this, extra budget was needed and was granted by the donor.

SKILLS TRAINING

Our experience with skills training for youth who are members of youth groups has demonstrated its sustainability in supporting employment and self-employment among youth. We are also proud of our efforts in supporting many mothers, young women and girls in income generation. A positive side effect of this adaptation is our ability to meet the high demand we found among young women and girls for home based income generation training.

- **20 Self-Help/Model Mothers' groups** with 300 members were formed.
- **All women have been trained** on nutrition and setting up vegetable gardens.
- **30 women were selected for training** on cow rearing.
 - **All women received start-up capital** on their Village Savings and Loans account.
- **Social Enterprise group established:** United Women Development Forum

YOUTH CLUB FORMATION:

- 15 Youth Clubs were formed with 516 members (294 males, 222 females, and 35 persons with disabilities).
- All Youth Clubs elected 4 board members, of whom 44% are women or girls.
- Developed constitutions
- Opened bank accounts
- 80 women/girls were trained in poultry or goat rearing.
- 2 Youth ICT Hubs are running.
- Youth groups organised: more than 90 campaigns (see photo sheet).
- Youth Clubs organised community meetings to create awareness of existing social safety nets provided by the Social Welfare Department.
- 1,131 people (517 males and 614 females) attended the meetings.

Grace and Marlon Genobaten, along with their daughter, are dedicated custodians of a 12-hectare mangrove area in Kulasihan, Lanao del Norte, Philippines. Combating climate change challenges like flooding and reduced fish populations, they actively care for the mangroves, plant saplings, and support local wildlife.



Advocacy & partnerships

Together we make change happen

2.1 PARTNERSHIPS

In 2023-24, VSO Netherlands continued to solidify, expand, and deepen its partnerships and cooperative relationships with the European Union (EU), European governments, and international foundations. Particularly, our representation in Brussels and our engagement with the Directorate-General International Partnerships (DG INTPA) of the EU were strengthened, along with our engagement with EU Delegations in VSO countries. We shared findings and lessons learned with these partners, engaging with them at various moments to provide (policy) recommendations and learn from each other. VSO has also strengthened its engagement with Dutch embassies and representations of European governments, such as the Austrian Developed Agency (ADA), Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), and others in its priority countries.

SHOWCASING OUR WORK

In support of EU engagement, VSO has focused its efforts on creating support for and visibility from its successful current projects. Our EU-funded programme, CLARITY (Tanzania), was highly appreciated by the EU, as evidenced by their reports, evaluations, and the joint learning event we hosted with the EU and SIDA. These projects are also used by the EU as best practice examples to showcase the work they finance to embassies active in similar thematic fields, and relevant UN bodies. VSO also hopes to build on its experience in the critical minerals sector.

2.2 NETWORKS, LOBBY AND ADVOCACY

In 2023-24, VSO further strengthened its relationships based on complementarity and mutual learning opportunities with partner civil society and knowledge institutes that are active in the same fields and working towards similar goals within the (Dutch) field of development

cooperation. Throughout our advocacy work, we have emphasised the importance of investing in active citizenship and Volunteering for Development. By being actively participating networks such as the Dutch Global Health Alliance, WO=MEN, Partos, and the Global Campaign for Education, VSO has been able to translate issues arising from the countries we work in and the primary actors we support to Dutch policy and political levels and agendas. Last year, VSO Netherlands continued its involvement in Dutch networks active in the fields of inclusive education, global health, and resilient livelihoods. By aligning even more strongly with VSO's global advocacy agenda in these three areas, we have been able to deepen our impact and amplify the voice of (youth from) the Global South at various events, such as the ConnectionWorks! Conference and the side event hosted during the Shaping Feminist Foreign Policy Conference of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs in The Hague.

CONNECTIONWORKS! CONFERENCE WITH RANDSTAD AND EDUKANS

Together with Randstad and Edukans, VSO organised the conference ConnectionWorks! on 18 April 2023 at the Randstad headquarters. The conference emphasised and raised awareness on the roles that government, civil society, companies, and youth need to fulfil in order to create enough decent jobs in the future labour market in Africa and the Middle East, especially in sectors like the green and digital economy. The conference brought together speakers from across the Dutch NGO sector, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, social enterprises, and many youth from Africa and the Netherlands.

SIDE EVENT DURING THE SHAPING FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY CONFERENCE

Through the Make Way programme, we hosted a side event on decolonising the narrative on

queerness in Africa during the Shaping Feminist Foreign Policy Conference hosted by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It was well attended and provided a rich discussion on the use of 'LGBTQI' in the African context and whether this provides the best approach going forward. The participants were very impressed and actively participated during the discussion. Afterwards, we developed a video on the session and published recommendations for the Feminist Foreign Policy towards the Dutch ministry, which can be found here:

MAKE WAY

With the Make Way programme, VSO supported advocacy efforts focusing on intersectional SRHR, youth participation, and global healthcare in Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda, Zambia, and Rwanda. Together with Wemos and Liliane Foundation, VSO also actively advocates for an intersectional lens in the Dutch SRHR policy, amongst other initiatives, by participating in the main SRHR network in the Netherlands, the 'SRHR platform'. In 2023-24, the SRHR Platform provided policy recommendations to the four parties involved in the process of forming a government, and hosted different events and conversations with Members of Parliament to maintain SRHR as a priority within the Dutch development policy.

CHALLENGE FUND FOR YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

In 2023-24, we enhanced the dissemination of knowledge, lessons, and evidence derived from the CFYE in the Dutch and international context. This included participation in events such as at the ConnectionWorks! Conference, where CFYE organised a workshop on the green economy and decent jobs for youth.

DUTCH GLOBAL HEALTH ALLIANCE

VSO jointly advocated alongside members of the Dutch Global Health Alliance (DGHA) to strengthen its lobbying and advocacy for Global Health and SRHR, and to learn from its members. Together with the DGHA, VSO provided policy advice for the Dutch Global Health Strategy and the healthcare priorities for the Ministry

of Health and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in implementing the Dutch Global Health Strategy. Among other recommendations, we ensured the advice emphasised reaching the most vulnerable, included meaningful youth participation as an essential component, and advocated strongly for the inclusion of links between climate and health.

PERSPACTIVE

In 2023-24, VSO actively participated in PerspActive, a network of five non government organisations – Woord & Daad, Dorcas, Red een Kind, and Edukans – to coordinate its youth employment and participation advocacy. The sixth member, Lilianefonds, joined the network in 2024.

GLOBAL CAMPAIGN FOR EDUCATION

We remained active in the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) Netherlands and took on the role of vice-president in 2023. From the GCE, a network comprising 8 member organisations, including two companies, the Dutch teachers' union, and five non government organisations, VSO coordinated its advocacy for inclusive education and sustainable development goal 4.

WO=MEN

As a member of the Dutch gender platform, WO=MEN, VSO raised awareness for gender equality and supported policy recommendations for the expected Feminist Foreign Policy of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Through its representation in the WO=MEN Gender and Sustainable Economic Development Working Group, VSO was able to share lessons and expertise from the CFYE programme.

PARTOS

VSO is also an active member of the branch organisation for development cooperation in the Netherlands. We actively participated in Partos' Climate Justice Community of Practice (CoP) programme, among other activities, by hosting a knowledge session for participants from the CoP.

Randstad

Randstad Volunteers

In 2023-24, Randstad supported seven VSO projects through 17 in-country assignments and one remote assignment conducted by Randstad employees.

Since January 2024, VSO Cambodia has hosted a Randstad volunteer in support of the GREEN project. As an entrepreneurial advisor, the Randstad volunteer contributed to strengthening fishing communities in the Tonle Sap area and helping them in finding alternative sources of income. His activities include leading a business incubator programme that provides training and support to unemployed youth and women, aimed at developing business models in green economy. The business support ranges from collecting and selling waste to establishing a floating grocery store that provides necessary goods in areas only accessible by boat. The Randstad volunteer has been pivotal in creating behavioural change among farmers and supporting SMEs in developing business plans and preparing successful grant applications.

Randstad volunteers also supported the Enhancing Youth Entrepreneurship and Employability programme (EYEE) in Tanzania and Zambia, providing expertise in areas such as small and medium enterprise business development, youth start-ups, work readiness training, and private sector/stakeholder engagement. The programme in Zambia also included awareness campaigns on legal rights and accessibility for people with disabilities. Through a series of live interviews on local radio stations and social media, the campaign touched on inclusion, improving legal rights, and accessible infrastructure for people with disabilities. As part of the campaign, Randstad volunteers also assisted in the organisation of a local level commemoration of the International Day for Persons with Disabilities in the Samfya District, in collaboration with local partners and governmental.

One of the volunteers based in Zambia extended

her placement to provide capacity building for a regional non governmental organization network focused on supporting young prisoners in re integrating into society.

During the last year of Tanzania's CLARITY project, a rights-based livelihood project in support of marginalised communities in a mining area, Randstad volunteers assisted local small business and CSOs in various roles, including private sector engagement, stakeholder advisory service, organisational development, and communication. Randstad volunteers supported the engagement with primary actors, CSOs, unions, and networks to combat harmful practices and environmental violations, and help improve social accountability. They also collaborated with Large Scale Mining (LSM) and Small Scale Mining (ASM) businesses to create better and more sustainable work conditions and environment.

Two of the Randstad volunteers provided start-up support for the new Boosting the Blue Economy (BBE) project during the first months of 2024, which started in January 2024.

RESULTS 2023-24

- 7 projects in Zambia, Tanzania, Kenya, and Cambodia
- Supported by 18 Randstad employee volunteers
- Totalling 9,240 volunteer hours
- 429 hours of remote mentoring for young entrepreneurs and job seekers
- € 30,000 donated as part of the Sports Week for Development Challenge
- € 103,320 donated as part of the Kilimanjaro Challenge in Kenya

BOOSTING THE BLUE ECONOMY (BBE) IN TANZANIA

This is the first co-created project by Randstad and VSO, directly funded by Randstad under the partnership programme. The project marks a unique start to the 20 year anniversary of cooperation between Randstad and VSO, and amplifies the support provided over the years through various challenge donations, such as the Kilimanjaro mountain climbing challenge, and direct contributions of hundreds of Randstad staff. The BBE project will run from January 2024 until December 2025.

The project aims to empower 3,000 young people living in coastal areas around Dar es Salaam to fully and equally participate in the economic opportunities arising from Tanzania's high potential new blue economy sector. This initiative will positively impact their lives, as well as those of their families and communities, leading to broader and more sustainable change and development. It also aims to help them achieve their aspirations, develop more resilient livelihoods, and promote inclusive growth. By working closely together with the Tanzanian government, non governmental organisations, and private sector partners, we will also raise awareness and knowledge among key stakeholders on transitioning to a more sustainable and circular economy.

Together with national volunteers and local partners, Randstad employee volunteers will provide technical expertise on labour market and stakeholder research, business development, life skills, and work readiness training for youth, as well as engage in private sector engagement, communication, and marketing.

SPORTS WEEK FOR DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGE

In 2023, 1,433 Randstad employees from 26 operating companies around the world participated in the Sports Week for Development Challenge, raising an incredible € 30,000 to fund a dedicated project in Zambia. The initiative supplemented the efforts of the EYEE project by promoting improved sustainable livelihoods for people with disabilities. The project provided entrepreneurial skills training to 50 beneficiaries, along with individual start up and booster capital for the businesses of 104 people with disabilities. To raise general awareness on disability, a community engagement programme on disability inclusion and best practices was initiated, involving families with children with disabilities, community leaders, and employers.

KILIMANJARO CHALLENGE

In October 2023, 19 Randstad employees from eight different countries began the Kilimanjaro trek with the goal of raising funds for the Access



to Green Jobs for Youth project in Kenya. Each employee was challenged to raise € 5,000 prior to the trek, and almost all achieved the goal, with some participants even substantially exceeding the target.

The Mount Kilimanjaro summit journey took a total of six days, with all 19 participants managing to reach the summit – a commendable accomplishment. Following the summit challenge, the Randstad employees visited the From Waste to Work project, which forms the foundation of the Access to Green Jobs for Youth project. In total, the participants raised over € 100,000 for the Kilimanjaro Challenge.

In addition to the ongoing initiatives of the From Waste to Work project, the extra funds generated from the Kilimanjaro Challenge have been directed towards interventions addressing inequalities experienced by young women in the waste sector. This includes the establishment of two women led community buyback centres that aim to address broader social and health needs such as life skills, sexual and reproductive health, unpaid work, and childcare for the young women in the waste sector. The project seeks to enhance the livelihoods and wellbeing of 200 marginalised young women between aged 18 to 35, thereby contributing to the development of a green economy.

INDIVIDUAL DONORS

Our work would not be possible without the support of our individual donors. In 2023-24, over 27,000 individual donors supported our work through donations and by spreading the word about VSO. Some of our donors also support us by volunteering in our office.

To keep our individual donors updated about the work they support, they receive the Changemakers magazine twice a year. This magazine features stories about our work and the changemakers behind it. We also organised the Meet the Changemakers event in the week before Christmas. During this live event, we established a digital connection between our supporters and our changemakers.





Mary Atieno Odhiambo visited Mbita Sub-county to choose her preferred family planning method. Through the DESIP program and collaborating locally, more people with disabilities and adolescents are accessing sexual and reproductive health and family planning services.

Our organisation

VSO Netherlands is an independent organisation that works fully in alignment with the global VSO organisation. VSO Netherlands contributes through programme development, raising funds, placement of voluntary experts abroad, providing information, and strengthening the programmes of our country offices by building partnerships in the Netherlands.

GOVERNANCE

VSO Netherlands has endorsed the principles of good governance outlined in the CBF Good Governance Code for Charities. These principles are included in the Qualification System for Charities, which replaces labels such as the CBF/CBF Certificate, the RfB label, and the Label for Charities as of 1 January 2016.

As of 1 October 2022, VSO Netherlands has a two-person Board of Directors, consisting of our co-directors Irene Slevén and Merijn de Jong. In addition to their roles as co-directors, they each dedicate 50% of their time to their responsibilities as Head of Programmes & Partnerships and Head of Fundraising and Communications. VSO Netherlands works with a Supervisory Board, with the primary responsibility for the organisation's actions resting on the co-directors and the Management Team. The co-directors fulfil their duties according to the regulations of the Board of Directors.

VSO Netherlands adheres to the Remuneration Scheme for directors of charitable organisations set by Goede Doelen Nederland, which establishes a maximum standard for annual income based on weighted criteria. The remuneration of the co-directors of VSO Netherlands is in accordance with function group E of the Remuneration Scheme (BSD score 322), with a maximum annual income of € 95,764 (from 1 April 2023), subject to an assessment.

From 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, the directors' total income amounted to € 87,168, while the total remuneration, including the employer's contributions, amounted to € 108,874. A breakdown of the salaries of the co-directors can be found in the annual accounts.

REPORT OF THE SUPERVISORY BOARD

The Supervisory Board of VSO Netherlands oversees the organisation's activities, serves as an advisor and interlocutor to the Management Team, and serves as the employer of the directors. Supervisory Board members help the organisation in achieving of its mission, goals, plans, and internal working methods by monitoring and providing constructive feedback, and by giving solicited and unsolicited advice to the Management Team.

As per the Articles of Association, the Supervisory Board is composed of five members who receive no compensation for their duties. Members of the Supervisory Board are appointed for a four-year term, with the possibility of reappointment once. There were no changes to the composition of the Supervisory Board during this financial year.

Guus Eskens (chair)

Starting date: March 2017

- Board member of Netherlands Society for Tropical Medicine and International Health (until October 2023)
 - Chairman of Stichting "Drie Straatjes", Rotterdam
 - Board member of the Otto van Kranendonk Fund (until October 2023)
 - Board member of the Knowledge Centre for Global Health (until May 2023)
 - Federation of European Societies for Tropical Medicine and International Health (FESTMIH)
-

Dr Philip Goodwin

Starting date: March 2018

Other positions:

- CEO VSO International
 - Trustee Royal National Lifeboat Association
-

Fons de Zeeuw

Starting date: May 2016

Other positions:

- CEO of VSO International
 - Trustee of Royal National Lifeboat Association
-

Maria Verheij

Starting date: January 2019

Other position:

- Global Head of Communications at Ahold Delhaize
 - Board member of JINC (per 30 June 2023)
-

Nynke Runia

Starting date: January 2019

Other positions:

- Manager Service & Support at Library Zuid-Kennemerland
 - Board member of Stichting ITGD (per March 2022)
-

MEETINGS AND AREAS OF OVERSIGHT

The Supervisory Board had four regular meetings during this financial year. In addition, the Supervisory Board held three update calls. In this period, the Supervisory Board's attention was focused on, among other things:

- **The planning and budgeting cycle**

the Supervisory Board approved the annual and financial reports 2022-2023, updated the multi-annual budget, and discussed and approved the annual plan and budget 2024-2025. The Supervisory Board received quarterly progress updates and financial updates to monitor activities and oversee financial management.

- **Programmes and partnerships**

the Supervisory Board took note of the progress in the programmes such as From Waste to Work, Make Way and the Challenge Fund for Youth Employment.

- **Public fundraising**

the Supervisory Board received the results of public fundraising and discussed the different fundraising channels and investments. The Supervisory Board took note of the efforts to increase loyalty among our supporters, developments in our online donor recruitment, and face-to-face fundraising.

- **Relation with VSO Global**

the Supervisory Board discussed relevant developments within VSO Global, as well as the collaboration between VSO Netherlands and VSO Global. The Supervisory Board discussed how the two organisations will intensify their collaboration over the coming years and met with VSO's International Board to discuss collaboration.

AUDIT AND REMUNERATION COMMITTEE

The Supervisory Board has two committees: the Audit Committee (Fons de Zeeuw (chair) and Nynke Runia) and the Remuneration Committee (Guus Eskens (chair) and Maria Verheij). The Audit Committee met four times in this financial year. The Audit Committee focused on the budget for 2024-2025, the multi-annual budget, financial monitoring, and the monitoring of the risk register.

The Remuneration Committee met once to discuss the objectives and work plan of the co-directors.

STRUCTURE AND STAFF

VSO Netherlands continues to operate as a flat organisation in which the professional responsibility of the employees is paramount. They work in both permanent and project based teams, which are closely with their counterparts in the global VSO organisation distributed across the offices around the world. This enables us to leverage the knowledge and skills within our international network.

In 2023-24 we have started to make plans for further collaboration between VSO Netherlands and the global organisation, leading to changes in our structure in 2024-25.

The five permanent teams within the organisation are:

- Make Way
- Challenge Fund for Youth Employment
- Strategic Partnerships
- Fundraising & Communications
- Support & Finance

The Management Team is comprised of the two co-directors (1 FTE total), also in their capacity as Head of Fundraising & Communications (0.5 FTE) and Head of Programme & Partnership Development (0.5 FTE). The Head of Operations (0.89 FTE) is the third member of the Management Team. A key focus of the Management Team this financial year was to enhance collaboration between the VSO Netherlands team and the VSO teams across the world. We worked on integrating processes and fostering collaboration.

As per 31 March 2024, 24 paid staff members (21 FTEs) were employed by VSO Netherlands. When necessary, we expand our permanent team with flex workers. In 2023-24, we employed six flex workers and two interns. On average, our sick leave rate was 10.4% throughout the year, which is significantly higher than the previous year (1.8%).

Long term sick leave especially increased.

VSO Netherlands adheres to the Social Work collective labour agreement for the remuneration of all employees. All positions are scaled in accordance with the positions specified in the Code of Conduct for Charities in the Netherlands. VSO Netherlands provides co-determination for its employees through staff representation (PVT). In 2023-24, the PVT consisted of three employees.

GLOBAL RECRUITMENT

Attracting the right kind of talent is key to any organisation. VSO's Recruitment Team in the Netherlands is part of a global team responsible for recruiting various roles throughout the global organisation and specific VSO programmes. Although programme staff and national volunteers are recruited within the project country, we recruit globally for roles such as international volunteers, consultants, and staff supporting the wider organisation.

In 2023-24, 44 new hires were recruited and onboarded by VSO Netherlands' recruiters to contribute to VSO's programme implementation:

- 21 international volunteers (mostly supporting livelihood, employment and education) started their assignments in one of our projects, including 13 Randstad employee volunteers and 5 volunteers who provided support remotely from their home country;
- 4 national volunteers (support given to local VSO teams; all national volunteers are typically recruited by the local project teams);
- 3 consultants, providing strategic or technical research and advisory support;
- 16 staff members, both supporting specific projects (e.g., HR managers, programme managers, and officers) and VSO's global organisation (e.g., healthcare advisor, proposal writer, and fundraising specialist).

RISK MANAGEMENT

In 2020, VSO Netherlands set up a risk register and identified all strategic risks for the organisation. The risk register is regularly assessed by the Management Team. Key risks are discussed on a quarterly basis with the Audit Committee. The Supervisory Board discusses the risk register at least once annually.

		Impact	Likelihood	Score		
Risks						
1. Financial sustainability partners and donors		4	5	16		
2. Financial sustainability public fundraising		3	4	12		
3. Compliance and duty of care		5	1	5		
4. Operating model and governance		4	4	12		
5. Operations and implementation programme specific risks		2	3	4		
Risk matrix						
Likelihood	5 = Almost certain more than 90% chance of occurring	5	10	15	20	25
	4 = Highly likely 75-90% chance of occurring	4	8	12	16	20
	3 = Likely 50-75% chance of occurring	3	6	9	12	15
	2 = Possible 25-50% chance of occurring	2	4	6	8	10
	1 = Inlikely less than 25% chance of occurring	1	2	3	4	5
		1 = Insignificant impact on achievement of programme objectives or reputation	2 = Minor impact on achievement of programme objectives or reputation	3 = Moderate impact on achievement of programme objectives or reputation, reducing what the programme delivers	4 = Major impact on achievement of programme objectives or reputation, setting the programme off-track	5 = Severe impact on achievement of programme objectives or reputation, setting the programme significantly off-track or making it non-viable
		Impact				

Our ambition

An Active Future!

In a world where active citizenship is becoming increasingly crucial, we are committed to fostering global connectivity and amplifying the voices of citizens. The rise of far-right parties, diminishing trust in global institutions, and shrinking spaces for progressive civil society organizations highlight the urgent need for individuals to engage and advocate for their beliefs. Our ambition is to play a vital role in strengthening active citizenship worldwide, linking it with initiatives in the Netherlands.

Building on our achievements over the past year, where **we contributed to creating more inclusive, open, resilient, and equal societies, we aim to further support marginalized and vulnerable people in taking action on development issues important to them.** We will continue to strengthen civil society, build a culture of volunteerism and civic engagement, and enhance the capacity of governments and service providers to respond to the demands of their citizens.

Through our youth volunteers, corporate volunteers, and national and community volunteers, VSO is dedicated to **building more equitable, safe, and thriving societies.** We believe that active citizenship **contributes to resilience, a critical component in our fragmented world.** We will continue to leverage our expertise and collaborate closely with partners to achieve our goals.

Our future outlook aligns closely with the priorities highlighted in the WRR report “Nederland in een fragmenterende wereldorde”, which emphasizes the importance of the **‘3W’s’: weerbaarheid (resilience), waarden (values), and welvaart (prosperity).** We interpret resilience as both safety and the necessity for adaptability and preparedness. Our work in this area includes enhancing the capacity of communities to withstand and recover from adversities, thus contributing to overall societal resilience.

As global fragility increases, VSO is committed to contributing to the NEXUS of peace and security. VSO Netherlands plans to register for ECHO in the future, aligning our three Practice Areas with the funding priorities of DG ECHO. Through our People First strategy, we bring together diverse groups to address marginalization and poverty, focusing on the most vulnerable populations such as PLWD, (young) women, youth, and LGBTQI individuals. **Understanding the drivers of vulnerability** and the disproportionate impact of disasters on marginalized groups is essential for effective resilience strengthening in ECHO projects.

Our Volunteering for Development model **makes us a flexible partner for ECHO,** with a wide range of highly skilled volunteers and youth groups deeply familiar with their local contexts. Current VSO projects in Education in Emergencies, Resilience Strengthening, and Mental Health and Psycho-Social Support (MHPSS) align well with DG ECHO’s priorities, opening additional funding opportunities. An example of our work in Inclusive Education is the initiative on ‘education in fragile contexts with a conflict-sensitive approach: safe learning and psychosocial well-being in education’ (VSO’s Global Inclusive Education Strategy 2021-2024).

Moreover, our commitment to values encompasses democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. We strive to create environments where these values are upheld and promoted, ensuring that marginalized voices are heard and respected. Our work aims to foster open and fair markets, enhance earning capacities, and elevate living standards, thereby contributing to broad-based prosperity.

Looking ahead, we see **tremendous potential for active citizens in fragile contexts** to support humanitarian responses, fostering more resilient and peaceful communities. Our commitment to this vision is unwavering, as we continue to build bridges between societies, institutions, policymakers, and companies, ensuring that the voices of the people are heard and valued.

We see tremendous potential for active citizens in fragile contexts to support humanitarian responses, fostering more resilient and peaceful communities.



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. 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 2023/24.

- African Union
- Austrian Development Agency
- Avert
- British Council
- Civil Society and Indigenous People's Mechanism of the Committee on World Food Security
- Deaf Child Worldwide
- Education Cannot Wait
- Consortium
- Education Development Trust
- European Commission
- Eriks Development Partner
- Errol & Glynis Pereira
- Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
- Global Affairs Canada
- Global Campaign for Education
- Global Partnership for Education
- GSRD Foundation
- Hempel Foundation
- IKEA Foundation
- Imagine Worldwide
- International Civil Society Centre
- International Forum for Volunteering in Development
- International Health Coverage
- Johns Hopkins University
- KfW Entwicklungsbank
- Lego Foundation
- Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of Cambodia under the loan of Asian Development Bank
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of The Netherlands
- Norwegian Refugee Council
- Onebillion
- Palladium
- Pan African Climate Justice Alliance
- Population Services Kenya
- Randstad
- Robert Carr Fund
- Civil Society Networks Fund
- Royal Norwegian Embassy
- Save the Children International
- Southern Africa Network of Prisons
- Standard Chartered Foundation
- Thammasat University
- The Worshipful Company of Grocers
- UCL
- UNESCO
- UNFPA
- UNICEF
- UNGEI
- UNOCHA
- UN Trust Fund
- UNV
- UNWOMEN
- USAID
- Weeshuis der Doopsgezinden
- Wees een Kans
- Wemos



Income	
From private individuals	2,468,260
From companies	452,848
From government grants	2,290,692
From affiliated (international) organisations	0
From other non-profit organisations	2,015,760
Total income	7,227,560
Expenditure	
Expenditure on objectives	5,790,103
Raising funds expenditure	813,133
Operating expenditures	482,968
Total expenditure	7,086,204
Balance income and expenditure	141,356
Balance financial income and expenditure	15,000
Net expenditure / income	156,356



ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

Balance as at 31 March 2024

		31.03.2024 in euro		31.03.2023 in euro
Fixed assets				
Tangible fixed assets		26,079		10,215
Current assets				
Debtors	265,617		350,836	
VSO current account	101,427		95,835	
Other receivables, prepayments, accrued income	1,117,775		2,210,091	
		1,484,818		2,656,762
Cash at bank and in hand		4,923,865		4,540,757
		6,434,762		7,207,734
Liabilities				
Funds				
Continuity reserve	1,785,972		1,984,201	
Designated reserve	0		0	
		1,785,972		1,984,201
Provisions		0		0
Liabilities				
Other		338,927		750,716
Current liabilities				
Creditors	96,468		56,768	
Taxes and social insurance	94,398		51,418	
Other payables, accruals and deferred income	4,118,996		4,364,630	
		4,309,862		4,472,816
		6,434,762		7,207,734

Statement of income and expenditure for financial year 2023-2024

INCOME	Financial year 2023-2024 in euro	Budget 2023-2024 in euro	Financial year 2022-2023 in euro
From private individuals	2,133,786	2,214,408	2,171,169
From companies	448,599	259,860	266,462
From government grants	3,328,496	3,342,370	2,690,396
From affiliated (international) organisations	0	0	0
From other non-profit organisations	1,767,478	2,233,138	327,581
Total income	7,678,358	8,049,776	5,455,608
Expenditure			
Expenditure on objectives			
Education	32,572	42,284	26,277
Health	2,012,080	1,540,866	1,597,072
Livelihoods	4,143,391	4,735,249	2,329,259
Education and communication	671,673	750,856	598,766
Total expenditure on objectives	6,859,715	7,069,255	4,551,374
Raising funds expenditure	707,367	778,793	608,945
Operating expenditure	343,029	341,947	267,045
Total expenditure	7,910,111	8,189,994	5,427,364
Balance income and expenditure	-231,752	-140,218	28,245
Balance financial income and expenditure	33,524	5,000	-2,728
Net expenditure / income	-198,228	-135,218	25,517
Movement designated reserves	0	0	75,087
Movement to continuity reserve	-198,228	-135,218	100,604
Expenditure on objectives as a percentage of total expenditure	87%	86%	84%
Raising funds expenditure as a percentage of total income	9%	10%	11%
Operating expenditure as a percentage of total expenditure	4%	4%	5%

Cash flow statement

	2023-2024 in euro	2022-2023 in euro
Cash flow from operational activities		
Net expenditure / income	-198,228	25,517
Depreciation	10,756	10,028
Working capital		
• Decrease / increase current assets	1,171,944	-91,979
• Increase / decrease provisions	0	-40,755
• Decrease / increase liabilities	-574,742	2,256,120
	409,729	2,158,932
Cash flow from investment activities		
Investments minus disposals	-26,620	0
	-26,620	0
Decrease / Increase Cash at bank an in hand	383,109	2,158,932
Balance at 1 April 2023/2022	4,540,757	2,381,825
Balance at 31 March 2024 / 2023	4,923,865	4,540,757
Decrease / Increase Cash at bank an in hand	383,109	2,158,932

The cash flow statement has been compiled according to the indirect method

VALUATION PRINCIPLES

General

VSO Netherlands has compiled the annual financial statements in conformity with Directive 650 for reporting by charitable organisations.

Assets and liabilities and the results are valued based on historical costs.

Assets and liabilities are reported in nominal values, unless otherwise stated in the balance sheet heading. Income and expenses have been allocated to the year to which they are applicable. Profits are only included if they were realised by the closing date. Loss and risks originating before the end of the reporting year are included if they were known before the annual financial statement was compiled. The income from legacies is included in the financial year for which the amount can reliably be determined.

Affiliated parties

From 20 March 2018 Stichting VSO Nederland and VSO Global have entered into an association. This replaces the former federation agreement. The Affiliate Agreement stipulates that VSO Global is entitled to appoint three of the five members of the supervisory board of VSO Netherlands (provided they fit in with the frameworks of independent supervision as stipulated by the CBF directives and in the articles of VSO Netherlands). The Agreement also stipulates that the chair of the supervisory board of VSO Netherlands is a member of the Board of Trustees of VSO Global. Furthermore, mutual settlement provisions have been made regarding recruitment costs, programme funding, and other activities which are jointly undertaken.

General basis of the annual financial statements / Conversion of foreign currency

Receivables, liabilities and obligations in foreign currency are calculated according to the exchange rate on the balance sheet date. Transactions in foreign currency during the reporting period are calculated in the annual financial statements according to the exchange rate at settlement. Exchange rate differences arising from conversion on the balance sheet date are included in the Statement of Income and expenditure.

Tangible fixed assets

We have valued tangible fixed assets at the acquisition price, less depreciation. The investments have been capitalised at the acquisition price less depreciation. The actual value of the tangible fixed assets is the same as the book value.

Receivables

Receivables are valued at nominal value. Any provisions for irrecoverability have been deducted from the amount.

Provision

The provision has been valued at nominal value.

Income

Income is recognised when it enters into an obligation to spend this income in accordance with the subsidy conditions

Legacies are recognised when the deed of distribution or if there is no deed of distribution, the invoice and accountability have been received. Only if the deed of distribution or the invoice and accountability has been received before the balance sheet date the income from the legacy will be recognized in the reporting year. Payments in the form of advance payments in the reporting year in which they are made are received as income from legacies.

NOTES ON THE ANNUAL FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Inception and aim

Foundation VSO Netherlands was established on 22 September 1989 and has as its aim combating

poverty, underdevelopment, and social exclusion in developing countries. The Foundation aims to achieve this by various means, including strengthening the knowledge and capacity of people, organisations and governments that are involved in this objective, and by disseminating information and conducting research.

Our address is Weg der Verenigde Naties 1, Utrecht.

Funding

The Foundation derives its funding from:

- subsidies;
- donations, gifts, bequests and legacies;
- contributions and donations from third parties and benefactors;
- other income.

The Foundation does not have the aim of generating profit.

Entitlements and obligations not included on the balance sheet

On 1 January 2020, VSO Netherlands entered into a new lease for the office space at Weg der Verenigde Naties 1 in Utrecht for a period of five years. VSO Netherlands has extended the contract by five years. The rent per annum for the coming financial year amounts to approximately EUR 97,578. Furthermore, VSO Netherlands has a leasing obligation for photocopying equipment for the coming year of EUR 7,500.

Occurrences after balance sheet date

Based on the standard of 1.5 times the annual expenses of the work organisation, the maximum allowable continuity reserve amounts to EUR 3,084,090.

To maintain eligibility for EU and EU member state funding, VSO Netherlands and VSO International will adopt a new governance model in 2024.

This transition will involve a deeper integration of processes, structures, and systems between the two entities. Additionally, we will reorganize to align with the new governance model. We expect these changes to create a more agile and effective staffing structure within both VSO Netherlands and VSO International.

Notes to the balance as at 31 March 2024

Assets (in euro)

Fixed assets

Tangible fixed assets	31.03.2024 in euro	31.03.2023 in euro
Book value as at 1 April	10,215	20,243
Additions	26,620	0
Disposals	-36,536	0
	299	20,243
Depreciation	10,756	10,028
Depreciation on disposals	-36,536	0
Book value as at 31 March	26,079	10,215

Current assets

VSO current account	31.03.2024 in euro	31.03.2023 in euro
Amounts due from VSO	101,427	95,835

No interest is calculated on the claims in the current account. The current account is a balance item for expenses advanced on both sides which are regularly settled by means of invoices.

Other receivables, prepayments, accrued income	31.03.2024 in euro	31.03.2023 in euro
Government grant receivable	1,016,152	1,407,249
Contributions for programme funding	20,369	0
Payments advanced to programme offices	0	724,303
Rental deposit	21,768	21,768
Rent	29,328	29,287
Interest	12,009	0
Other	18,149	27,485
	1,117,775	2,210,091

Cash at bank and in hand	31.03.2024 in euro	31.03.2023 in euro
Savings accounts	4,220,428	1,887,024
Current account	703,140	2,653,146
Cash at bank and in hand	297	587
	4,923,865	4,540,757

De liquid assets are immediately payable

FIXED ASSETS

The total acquisition value of the tangible fixed assets amounts to € 168,421. The cumulative depreciation amounts to €142,342. The insured value of the tangible fixed assets is €148,000.

OTHER RECEIVABLES, PREPAYMENTS, ACCRUED INCOME

The receivable from the government includes the total five-year unconditional contract with a total value of € 2,402,050 of which an amount of € 1,612,880 has been received. The remaining amount for this contract is € 789,170.

Liabilities (in euro)

Funds	31.03.2024 in euro	31.03.2023 in euro
<u>Continuity reserve</u>		
As at 1 April	1,984,201	1,883,597
Deficit for the year	-198,228	100,604
As at 31 March	1,785,972	1,984,201
<u>Designated reserve</u>		
"Caroline van der Wal prize"		
As at 1 April	0	75,087
Movement financial year	0	-75,087
As at 31 March	0	0

The credit balance of € 198,228 for the financial year 2023-2024, has been deducted from the continuity reserve

Provisions	31.03.2024 in euro	31.03.2023 in euro
As at 1 April	0	40,755
Donations financial year	0	0
Disbursed financial year	0	40,755
As at 31 March	0	0

In 2022-2023 the provision was used to pay back the received funds as they were not allowed to be charged to the programme.

Liabilities	31.03.2024 in euro	31.03.2023 in euro
Other	338,927	750,716

Taxes and social insurance	31.03.2024 in euro	31.03.2023 in euro
Taxes and social insurance	42,324	30,313
Pensions	52,074	21,105
	94,398	51,418

Other payable, accruals and deferred income	31.03.2024 in euro	31.03.2023 in euro
Holiday allowance, leave and year-end bonus	186,193	134,716
Advance contributions for programme funding	1,594,601	3,189,069
Liabilities to programme	2,239,431	898,679
Audit fees	35,695	35,695
Other	63,076	106,470
	4,118,996	4,364,630

ADVANCE CONTRIBUTION FOR PROGRAMME FUNDING

The advance contribution for programme funding is the remaining difference between received and spent funding. At March 31st this is built up from as followed:

Advance contributions for programme funding	31.03.2024 in euro	31.03.2023 in euro
IKEA Foundation - From Waste to Work	1,193,717	1,723,764
MFA NL Make Way VSO	342,053	901,076
Austrian Development Cooperation - IPDHE	0	505,747
GSRD Foundation - Bangladesh	35,365	46,155
Other small grants	23,466	12,327
	1,594,601	3,189,069

LIABILITIES TO PROGRAMME

The liabilities to programme includes an unconditional five-year contract with a programme partner. The total amount of the contract is € 2,402,050 of which € 1,448,705 was advanced to the partner up to 31 March 2024. From the remaining liability, € 338,927 is presented as a long-term liability and € 614,418 is included in the current liabilities.



NOTES TO THE STATEMENT OF INCOME AND EXPENSES FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2023- 2024

Analysis of differences between the budget and the actual figures

The Kilimanjaro challenge was included in the budget for income from private individuals. This event was organized in collaboration with Randstad during the financial year, which means that the income is presented in the currents under income from companies. The total income for the climbing event was EUR 103,320, with a budget of EUR 100,000 included. See also page 35 for a detailed description of the Kilimanjaro challenge. Apart from this shift, income from private individuals in the financial year is in line with the budget. The income from companies, government grants and other non-profit organizations are linked to the expenditure within the various programs. This means that when the spending on a certain program varies, the related income moves in the same direction. In 2023-2024 the spending on the grant from companies were higher than budget and therefore income on this income line is higher than budget. The spending

on grants from non- profit organisations were lower than budget and therefore the income was lower than budget.

Together this leads to a lower total income of € 371,000 compared to budget. For more detailed explanation what work has been done on the different grants please refer to chapter 5 (Impact).

In addition to this we have invested in staff in both The Netherlands and the four Challenge Fund Youth Employment programme country offices to work towards our goals on placements and delivering technical assistant for the Challenge Fund Youth Employment programme. During this year the placements stayed behind target in all four countries which led to a negative balance of € 235,000 which is paid from our reserves.

On the other hand we see a lower expenditure in raising funds expenditures and education and communication of €150, 000. Overall, our budget was prepared with a negative balance of € 135,000, but due to the above mentioned reasons the balance of the income and expenditure for the financial year 2023-2024 is a negative balance of € 198,228.



Income (in euro)

	FY 2023-2024 in euro	Budget 2023-2024 in euro	FY 2022-2023 in euro
From private individuals			
Donations	2,112,819	2,164,408	2,133,695
Legacies	20,967	50,000	37,475
Total	2,133,786	2,214,408	2,171,169
From companies			
Companies	448,599	259,860	266,462
Total	448,599	259,860	266,462
From government grants			
Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs	2,595,767	2,730,660	1,546,143
Austrian Development Agency	732,729	611,710	144,253
Total	3,328,496	3,342,370	2,690,396
From other non-profit organisations			
IKEA Foundation	1,440,547	1,866,532	276,236
Other foundations	326,931	366,606	51,345
Total	1,767,478	2,233,138	327,581
Balance financial income and expenditure			
Interest on bank deposits	33,524	5,000	-2,728
Total	33,524	5,000	-2,728

FROM GOVERNMENT GRANTS

The income from Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs is related to the spending in the Make Way programme (see page 5) and Challenge Fund for Youth Employment programme (see page 10). The income from Austrian Development Agency is related to the spending in Integrated Peacebuilding, Development & Humanitarian Efforts across borders (see page 26).

DUTCH MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Make Way Policy Framework for Strengthening

Civil Society - SRHR Partnership fund

31-12-2025 awarded

Challenge Fund for Youth Employment

31-12-2025 awarded

FROM OTHER NON-PROFIT ORGANISATIONS

IKEA Foundation

In November 2022, the From Waste to Work program financed by the IKEA Foundation started. The income of € 1,440,547 included in this annual report is related to the expenses incurred in this financial year. The total direct expenditure for the program amounts to € 1,346,865, and overhead spend in country office amounts to € 46,841. This brings the total spend in country office to € 1,393,706. The part of the overhead compensation related to VSO Netherlands amounts to € 46,841. Which brings the total spend for this grant is € 1,440,547

Expenditure (in euro)

Total expenditure	FY 2023-2024 in euro	Begroting 2023-2024 in euro	FY 2022-2023 in euro
Staff costs	1,162,426	1,210,977	886,035
Subsidies and programme contributions granted	1,961,488	2,079,381	1,946,136
Payments to affiliated (international) organisations	4,425,250	4,512,716	2,280,471
Communication	59,691	90,952	68,745
Housing	141,840	132,353	106,197
Other expenditure	159,415	163,616	139,780
	7,910,111	8,189,994	5,427,364

Staff costs	FY 2023-2024 in euro	Begroting 2023-2024 in euro	FY 2022-2023 in euro
Wages	1,483,322	1,951,645	1,319,409
Social security costs	213,537	pm	243,230
Pension	133,439	pm	135,021
Wages charged on to VSO/GCE	-116,808	-130,165	-144,568
	1,713,490	1,821,480	1,553,092
Wages charged on programmes	-588,977	-630,303	-688,905
Agency workers	37,914	19,800	21,849
Total Staff costs	1,162,426	1,210,977	886,035

In this fiscal year an average of 21 FTEs were employed by VSO Nederland (2022-2023: 23 FTEs)

Name	Merijn de Jong	Irene Sleven
Position	Co-director	Co-director
Employment	Fixed term	Fixed term
Hours	18	18
Part-time percentage	50%	50%
Period	12	12
Remuneration (EU)		
Annual income		
Gross wage/salary	37,262	37,262
Payout IKB PG	6,362	6,163
Payout IKB NPG	60	60
One-time payment	-	-
Total annual income	43,683	43,485
Employer's charges		
Social security	4,008	4,056
ZVW	2,265	2,294
Pension premium	4,541	4,541
Total	54,497	54,376

The 'BSD' score is 322 which relates to function group E for both Co-directors.

Subsidies and programme contributions granted and payments to affiliated (international) organisations	FY 2023-2024 in euro	Begroting 2023-2024 in euro	FY 2022-2023 in euro
Costs related to programmes	5,352,320	5,455,535	3,280,184
Education and communication	460,533	527,150	430,660
Raising funds expenditure	443,824	507,150	416,824
Operating expenditure	130,062	102,262	98,939
	6,386,739	6,592,097	4,226,607

Subsidies and programme contributions granted and payments to affiliated (international) organisations	FY 2023-2024 in euro	Begroting 2023-2024 in euro	FY 2022-2023 in euro
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Costs related to programmes

Make Way	1,769,147	1,346,534	1,348,078
Challenge Fund Youth Employment	756,482	1,011,448	1,101,582
Integrated Peacebuilding, Development & Humanitarian Efforts across borders	693,245	586,153	216,339
Randstad	394,604	236,249	252,155
From Waste to Work	1,393,706	1,803,391	272,219
Capacity-building programme Bangladesh	348,450	206,760	62,644
Other costs related to programmes	-3,314	265,000	27,166
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>5,352,320</i>	<i>5,455,535</i>	<i>3,280,183</i>

Education and communication

<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>460,533</i>	<i>527,150</i>	<i>430,660</i>
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Raising funds expenditure

Donor recruitment	341,843	348,500	303,077
Acquisition of private and company funds	18,639	36,900	30,427
Donor upgrading and loyalty	31,889	22,000	34,540
Donor database	29,206	27,500	25,086
One-off donations and legacies	5,386	20,000	15,468
Events	6,371	7,250	367
Other raising funds expenditures	10,491	45,000	7,860
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>443,824</i>	<i>507,150</i>	<i>416,824</i>

Operating expenditure

Board costs	7,468	10,000	12,608
Audit fees	67,872	37,250	31,460
Payroll administration	7,201	8,712	7,021
Legal fees	25,400	6,000	12,417
Consultancy	22,119	21,100	35,363
Other operating expenditures	0	19,200	70
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>130,062</i>	<i>102,262</i>	<i>98,939</i>

Total	6,386,739	6,592,097	4,226,606
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Communication, Housing and Other expenditure	FY 2023-2024 in euro	Budget 2023-2024 in euro	FY 2022-2023 in euro
Communication			
Public campaign	56,370	86,952	64,130
Other communication	3,321	4,000	4,614
Total	59,691	90,952	68,745
Housing			
Rent	128,188	116,836	92,117
Other housing	13,652	15,517	14,080
Total	141,840	132,353	106,197
Other expenditure			
<i>Depreciation</i>			
Inventory	10,756	5,000	10,028
<i>Other staffing costs</i>			
Commuting	27,451	30,000	21,624
Advertising	1,878	2,000	17,209
Other travel	112	3,800	1,362
Training	38,170	35,000	21,082
Health and safety service	5,678	5,954	6,566
Other staffing costs	7,196	4,680	1,558
<i>Office expenditure</i>			
Office supplies	6,781	14,108	10,558
Mail	409	1,200	702
IT costs	45,178	45,798	34,464
Telephone and internet	6,680	8,760	6,747
Scanning and printing costs	9,126	7,316	7,880
Total	159,415	163,616	139,780

Notes to burden sharing

Specification and distribution of implementation costs according to objectives

Objectives in euro	1*	2*	3*	4*	Raising funds expenditure	Operating expenditure	FY 2023-2024	Budget 2023-2024	FY 2022-2023
Subsidies and programme contributions granted	367	319,605	607,097	460,533	443,824	130,062	1,961,488	2,079,381	1,946,136
Payments to affiliated (international) organisations	0	1,449,594	2,975,656	0	0	0	4,425,250	2,512,716	2,280,471
Staff costs	24,574	185,333	427,801	161,112	201,100	162,507	1,162,426	1,210,977	886,035
Communication	1,262	9,517	21,968	8,273	10,327	8,345	59,691	90,952	68,745
Housing	2,998	22,614	52,200	19,659	24,538	19,829	141,840	132,353	106,197
Other expenditure	3,370	25,416	58,668	22,095	27,579	22,286	159,415	163,616	139,780
	32,572	2,012,080	4,143,391	671,673	707,367	343,029	7,910,111	8,189,994	5,427,364

1 Education

2 Health

3 Livelihoods

4 Education and communication

For allocation of expenses to the designated posts, VSO Netherlands makes use of the document 'Recommendation for application of Directive 650 for management and administration expenses', which is compiled by the sector organisation Goede Doelen Nederland. This means that expenses falling under management, board of directors, general secretariat and finances, and planning and control are fully allocated to operating expenditure. Where the direct efforts of management, board of directors, general secretariat and finances, and planning and control have been devoted to objectives and/or acquisition of income, these expenses are, in that case, calculated pro rata. Expenses reported under IT, accommodation, facilities management and HR are calculated pro rata based on the FTEs budgeted. Staffing costs, legal fees and communication expenses are allocated, as far as possible, to the objective for which they have been incurred, or calculated pro rata based on the FTEs budgeted.

**If you would like to know more about
VSO's work, visit www.vso.nl**

VSO Nederland

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