

New £27million funding partnership announced with VSO at Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting

The UK Government has today (Saturday 25 June) announced a new £27m partnership with the UK's leading overseas volunteering charity, VSO, to empower people living in low-income countries across the Commonwealth and other countries to take control of their futures.

The Active Citizenship Through Inclusive Volunteering & Empowerment (ACTIVE) programme aims to reach 2.5 million people across 18 countries by mobilising marginalised groups – including women, young people and those with disabilities – to act on the issues that are most important to them and their local communities.

This funding will build on the volunteering for development model to help strengthen locally led organisations and create a culture of volunteerism, whilst building the capacity of the UK's partner countries, including Rwanda, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Eswatini, Sierra Leone, Zambia, Tanzania, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Uganda and Bangladesh to respond to the demands of their citizens.

It will include twinning partnerships between hospitals in the UK and those in our partner countries to exchange skills and learning, including on areas like childhood cancer and family planning. Lewisham and Greenwich NHS trust and Rwanda's Nyagatare District Hospital are already working together, and further partnerships are planned with hospitals across the UK.

Education partnerships will also be a cornerstone of the ACTIVE programme, including the Numeracy for All project, which will support teachers to make and use low – and no-cost – teaching aids that encourage active and playful maths learning.

Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister of State for South and Central Asia, North Africa, UN and the Commonwealth, said:

The new ACTIVE programme will be a unique opportunity to use British expertise through volunteering to support our partner countries to take the lead in their own development.

By unleashing the potential of individuals and communities through voluntary work, while supporting the best locally led organisations to meet the priorities of the people and communities they benefit, we can bring about lasting, inclusive change.

I am delighted that the UK Government can take their partnership with VSO to the next level through this exciting new programme.

The FCDO Minister for the Commonwealth announced the Partnership for Change at a roundtable with Rwandan civil society whilst at CHOGM in Kigali.

ACTIVE will build on the success of VSO's FCDO funded (£70.5m) Volunteering for Development programme, which ended in March 2022. Over the course of the five-year programme FCDO supported over 350 local partner organisations and more than 6,500 volunteers in 24 countries, to improve access to health, education and livelihood services for 5 million people.

Dr Philip Goodwin, CEO of VSO said:

Volunteering for development has helped to make the UK a global leader and authority in quality and inclusive volunteering practices that put volunteers and the most marginalised people at the centre of the influencing change in their own lives

The ACTIVE grant will enable VSO to continue to support national and community-based volunteers to be agents for change.