

# A STRATEGY FOR COMIC RELIEF GRANTS: DOING SOMETHING SERIOUS WITH MONEY

COMIC  
RELIEF

## WHAT IS COMIC RELIEF?

For more than 30 years, the public has been doing something funny for money. In 1988 Red Nose Day exploded onto the scene, raising millions and transforming lives, then in 2002 Sport Relief joined in, inspiring millions more challenge-loving people to get involved too.

By raising more than £1 billion, we've been able to help more than 50 million people, working with partners who've created positive, lasting change in the lives of individuals, families and communities worldwide, while achieving real progress with the critical issues we strive to tackle.

Our vision is A Just World Free From Poverty, where everyone is **safe, healthy, educated and empowered** – here in the four nations of the UK and around the world. And with our new grants strategy, we're aiming to have a bigger impact than ever before.

## HOW WE WORK

- We create lasting changes in the lives of disadvantaged people, in the UK and across the world's poorest communities
- We help create positive change through the power of entertainment – engaging the public through a wide range of channels, including great BBC broadcast opportunities
- We collaborate with civil society, businesses, government and other funders, providing immediate help to those in need, while also tackling the root causes of poverty and injustice. We want to expand and deepen relationships with these key players, while also working with a diverse range of new, carefully chosen partners
- We're looking for great organisations who can offer a fresh approach. We'll work in collaboration with them, uniting all our efforts towards shared goals. And we'll be more proactive – looking for local organisations embedded deep in the communities we want to help. They know exactly what they need to thrive so we believe they should be the ones setting the agenda for change
- Comic Relief primarily supports work that aims to bring about lasting change in people's lives. But we do make exceptions – particularly where our supporters expect us to pull out all the stops and to play our part in humanitarian crises. We support skilled partners in the UK and beyond who can respond to devastation, help people put their lives back together and build community resilience for the future



# A STRATEGY FOR COMIC RELIEF GRANTS: DOING SOMETHING SERIOUS WITH MONEY

Despite dramatic improvements in many people's lives all over the planet, many countries and communities have been left behind and life is still incredibly tough.

## FOUR KEY PROGRAMME AREAS

To help us achieve our vision of A Just World Free From Poverty – where everyone is **safe, healthy, educated and empowered** – we're now focusing all our support on four key areas:



**Investing in children and young people to be ready for the future**



**Empowering women and girls to be free to lead the lives they choose**



**Improving the health and wellbeing of vulnerable and disadvantaged people**



**Building stronger communities in areas of disadvantage, deprivation and poverty**

## DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY

We're also taking a new approach with our grants strategy. We're more agile and proactive, we're reaching out to new partners and we're taking more of a 'people-centred' approach – co-creating projects with experts on the ground. Why? Because we want to have a bigger impact than ever before. Here's the lowdown:

### A GLOBAL APPROACH

For the first time, we've joined our UK and international grant strategies, because even though the countries and contexts we work in can be hugely different, the issues, root causes and solutions are often strikingly similar. You'll see our new strategy is also closely linked to several of the new Global Goals for Sustainable Development (SDGs), so it's more important than ever that we take a global perspective.

A global approach doesn't mean everything will be the same. We're very aware that context matters and we know that working in the nations and regions of the UK can be as varied as working in Asia and Africa.

## AGILE RESPONSE

In the last five years alone, the world has experienced major change. We've seen rapid digital innovations; mass movement of people; climate-related disasters; changing roles and relationships between the state, civil society and the private sector; major changes in geo-political insecurities and a new focus across the world with the Global Goals for Sustainable Development. For the first time, these goals now challenge the UK too. These changes mean we need to think carefully about how and where we can make the biggest difference in this new context – in the UK and internationally. As well as more focused strategic grant making, we'll need to be faster on our feet, reacting to new trends, sudden crises or turbulent economies by offering smaller, local responsive grants and initiatives that deliver funds quickly and add value.

## PEOPLE AT THE CENTRE

You'll also see more of a 'people know best' approach where we work with individuals and organisations 'on the ground' – whether that's a social entrepreneur working in the slums of Nairobi, or a young mum in Newcastle who's overcome post-natal depression and wants to help new mums thrive.

While still working with many traditional charities and trusted partners, we'll also support emerging leaders and talent, working with organisations including social enterprises and grass-roots charities, based in the communities we want to help.

You'll also see us doing more work directly with organisations in the 'Global South' – collaborating with local experts who bring fresh insights and invaluable insider knowledge. This new approach will often involve working through new partners and creating projects and programmes together with these partners.

We'll also support some enterprises and help them tackle poverty by improving incomes and skills and by providing decent jobs and affordable products and services to people on very low incomes.

## SIMPLER APPLICATIONS FOR ORGANISATIONS BIG AND SMALL

We've streamlined our grants application process, introducing systems and tools that make it much easier for all organisations to apply. Not only will the entire process be easier, but we'll award grants more quickly too.

## BEING MORE PROACTIVE

We'll be running fewer open calls and instead taking a more proactive approach to funding – investing more time in searching out the right partners to work on specific projects. Current and future opportunities to apply for funding are explained on our website: [comicrelief.com/grants](https://comicrelief.com/grants)

## PIONEERING DIGITAL SOLUTIONS

We're looking for partners that can help us, and the agencies we support, use digital solutions to achieve three key things – improve and expand services for people who desperately need them, give more people access to crucial information, and develop pioneering new products that help us achieve our goals.

## HOW CHANGE HAPPENS

Comic Relief primarily makes grants to create long-term change, to help us achieve a world where everyone is **safe, healthy, educated and empowered**.

We believe that, in making change happen, the following are crucial:

- **Voice, influence and agency**

We'll fund work that helps people develop the self-confidence, voice and skills to take control of decisions affecting their lives. Whether that's ensuring health services meet local needs, trying to leave a dangerous or abusive situation, or encouraging whole communities to come together to create change

- **Services and resources**

We'll help people understand what resources and services are available to them. We fund projects that help people to access these services and overcome any barriers they may face

- **Policy, attitudes, values and culture**

We fund work that challenges policies, behaviours and cultural attitudes which discriminate against specific groups of people



## SPORT FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

Sport continues to play an important role in improving the lives of millions of people across the world. It brings people together to play, learn, improve health and benefit from shared experiences. It is also a powerful tool for helping bring about social change. Comic Relief's Sport for Change strategy will run across our UK and international work, while focusing on our four programme areas. This will include using sport as a tool to increase community cohesion, to address issues affecting women and girls and to deliver health messaging. We'll also be focusing on key areas where our analysis suggests Sport for Change can really make a difference:

- Young people and conflict, violence and gangs
- Education and employability skills for young people who are not in education, employment or training
- Reducing stigma and discrimination, changing attitudes and promoting equality
- Isolated older people and those living with dementia
- Increasing opportunities for people with disabilities

## WHERE WE'LL HELP

Of all the money raised by the public each year, we'll spend 40%-50% helping people right here in the UK. The rest is spent internationally, focusing on the poorest communities, mainly in Africa, but also reaching communities in Asia, Latin America and beyond.

## LEARNING AND SHARING

We aim to be transparent and we take accountability to our partners, to the public and to the communities we're supporting, very seriously.

We want to understand how our grants are working – what went well, who was helped, how many people and in what ways. We also want to understand when and why things don't achieve their potential. We want to support organisations we fund to improve their monitoring, evaluation and learning and to strive for greater impact and better use of all resources, knowledge and skills.

We will actively collaborate with others, learn from them and share what we know and do widely – we have a responsibility as a large and leading grant maker to do this well.



# FOUR COMPELLING PROGRAMME AREAS

In order to make the most difference and get closer to our vision of A Just World Free From Poverty, we must carefully choose which issues we fund and who we work with. In working towards our vision, we're now focusing on these four areas:



Investing in children and young people to be ready for the future



Empowering women and girls so they're safe and free to lead the lives they choose



Improving health and wellbeing of vulnerable and disadvantaged people



Building stronger communities in areas of disadvantage, deprivation and poverty



## INVESTING IN CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TO BE READY FOR THE FUTURE

### WHY FOCUS ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE?

All over the world, millions of children and young people have a gruelling start to life, from missing out on basic education to being exposed to violence, exploitation and abuse. In the UK, children and young people that miss school and fail to reach their potential are often coping with difficult life experiences, like caring for an adult, or living with parents who are battling substance or alcohol use.

We have the largest generation of young people in the world ever. This creates particular challenges, like creating enough

jobs, but there's also huge opportunity. Young people have a vast amount of creativity, ideas, energy and hope. They have the potential to be a force for positive change. We want to facilitate and help young people be at the forefront of change.

Evidence suggests that support early on in life produces happier, more secure and productive young adults. Through our funding, we want to help children and young people move successfully through crucial key life transitions - into school, into adolescence and into a fulfilled and positive adulthood.



## OUR PRIORITIES



1. Good quality, safe ongoing education



2. Protection from violence, conflict and abuse



3. Building young people's enterprise and leadership



### PRIORITY 1: Good quality, safe, ongoing education.

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#### What we'll support

We'll improve access to quality education and life skills by supporting work that:

- Reaches the most marginalised – working in sub-Saharan Africa, we want to overcome major barriers like conflict, weak education systems, stigma and discrimination and help more children and young people get a good quality education. While enrolment in education is up dramatically, many children are still left behind – usually the most marginalised and hardest to reach, such as children living in extreme poverty, girls, refugee children, disabled young people or children living on the streets or working. And millions of children are in school but not learning – we want to help the least advantaged to read, write, learn maths and life skills
- Provides second chances – all sorts of things can bring education to an abrupt end – conflict, natural disasters, displacement, HIV and AIDS, disability, religion, gender or language. In the UK, it could be anything from family breakdown to caring responsibilities. We'll support holistic, flexible approaches to education and training that keep young people learning
- Keeps learners safe – working in the UK and around the world, we'll support safer educational environments, protecting children from all sorts of threats, from gender-based abuse, to those affected by conflict and war. We'll support projects that give children a voice, while encouraging a 'whole-school' approach – uniting pupils, frontline staff, school leaders, parents and the community in a bid to make schools safe, fulfilling places to be



### PRIORITY 2: Protection from violence, conflict and abuse.

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#### What we'll support

We believe children and young people should be protected and empowered so they can shape their own futures. We want to help achieve this through supporting work that:

- Provides safety – working internationally and in the UK, we'll support organisations that take a holistic approach, looking at the many factors that affect children's development and well-being. We'll help strengthen the individual's and the communities' resources, providing everything from education to training, so we can help all sorts of vulnerable groups – whether it's street and working children, trafficked young people, refugees on the move, families just arrived in a new country, or unaccompanied children
- Creates safer families – working internationally and in the UK, we'll help tackle physical, emotional or sexual abuse and domestic violence



## PRIORITY 3: Building young people's enterprise and leadership

### What we'll support

Working in the UK and internationally, we'll support projects that use innovative new ideas to help to give young people a voice by:

- Building their confidence and self-esteem, improving their decision making skills and empowering them to secure the resources they need
- Bringing about positive change in their environment, through anything from shaping cultural values to tackling government policy
- Equipping them with the relevant skills and training to enable them to grow businesses and gain productive employment



## EMPOWERING WOMEN AND GIRLS SO THEY'RE SAFE AND FREE TO LEAD THE LIVES THEY CHOOSE

### WHY FOCUS ON WOMEN AND GIRLS?

The lives of women and girls across the world have improved in many ways over the last 25 years, but there is still so much to do.

Women and girls are exposed to high levels of violence. Around the world, one in three women and girls will experience domestic violence or sexual assault in their lifetime. In the UK, the police receive a call about domestic violence every minute.

The world of work is equally unjust. Women perform two thirds of the world's work and produce half of our food, but earn less income and own less property. Women still carry out the most

poorly valued and low paid jobs. Although women make up more than half the population, they represent only 20% of political leaders in the world.

We believe that women and girls must have the right to have control over their own bodies, to live free from violence, to have a voice in their community and country, to work safely and to earn a decent wage. Investing in women and girls brings incredible returns – when a woman earns her own income she re-invests it in her family and community.



### OUR PRIORITIES



1. Tackling violence – enabling women to live free from harm, increasing protection and providing crucial support



2. Helping women work and ensuring equality



3. Leadership – ensuring women participate fully with equal opportunities for leadership at all levels



## PRIORITY 1:

### Tackling violence – enabling women to live life free from harm, increasing protection and providing crucial support

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#### What we'll support

Working in the UK and around the world, we'll fund work that:

- Ensures greater protection and better support for women and girls who have experienced, or are at risk of, harm. This might include intimate partner violence, domestic abuse, sexual abuse or exploitation, early and forced marriage, honour-based violence, bride price, female genital mutilation (FGM), or other harmful practices
- We'll help those groups who are often ignored or remain invisible – for example older women; young women and girls exploited through gangs or stigmatised for their sexuality; women living with HIV; or those from black and minority, ethnic and refugee (BME) backgrounds. We're also interested in pioneering work on the critical role men can play in reducing gender-based violence
- We want to achieve the following goals of: reducing levels of violence against women and girls; informing and challenging young people about healthy relationships, abuse and consent; ensuring women and girls who experience violence and abuse get help earlier – and have access to the services they need to rebuild their lives



## PRIORITY 2:

### Helping women work and ensuring equality

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#### What we'll support

Financial independence and equality for women is not only a right, but it also brings widespread benefits to the whole community, families and children. Specifically, we'll support projects that help us achieve these goals:

- Improve the working conditions for women in low paid and unsafe work
- Help women earn more by accessing finance, assets and training opportunities
- Help poor or especially disadvantaged women enter or return to the job market, whether as paid employees or through self-employment – this might include asylum seekers, carers and women who have mental health issues, are homeless or recovering from addiction

We will support initiatives that tackle in-work poverty, helping women and men trapped in a cycle of low pay and poor progression opportunities and we support holistic initiatives to improve working conditions and income for women, such as the Living Wage Campaign to which we have already made a significant commitment in the UK.



## PRIORITY 3:

### Leadership – ensuring women participate fully with equal opportunities for leadership at all levels

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#### What we'll support

Our focus on increasing 'voice, influence and agency' is key here. We'll work with organisations that can empower women to reach their potential by focusing on three key areas:

- Ensuring women have the confidence, skills and voice to create change
- Increasing women's confidence and voice; while removing institutional barriers to women's full participation in society
- Increasing the representation and leadership of women in society so they can play a full and equal role in driving social change



## IMPROVING HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF VULNERABLE AND DISADVANTAGED PEOPLE

### WHY FOCUS ON HEALTH AND WELLBEING?



There are strong links between poverty, poor health and wellbeing. We've seen great progress in the last 20 years, but inequality means we still face serious challenges. In 2015, 5.9 million children worldwide died before their fifth birthday. In 2014, 36.9 million people were living with HIV globally, but

less than half were getting treatment. In the UK, nearly half of children in care, and 95% of imprisoned young offenders, have a mental health disorder, while more than two thirds of homeless people in the UK have physical health problems. More than half of people trafficked to the UK for sexual exploitation, domestic work and forced labour experience severe mental health problems, including depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Whether vulnerable people are facing the challenges of living with HIV in Malawi, or seeking treatment for depression in Leeds, a mixture of social, cultural, environmental and economic barriers often stop people from getting the support they desperately need. All around the world, millions of lives are damaged or sadly lost every year.

Working mainly in the UK and sub-Saharan Africa, we'll prioritise work that addresses physical and mental health and wellbeing – working with individuals, families, communities and service providers to find solutions together. We'll also help people living with long term conditions like HIV, by supporting projects that help vulnerable people living with these conditions to still lead fulfilling lives.

### OUR PRIORITIES



1. Helping people access quality health and wellbeing services



2. Tackling stigma and discrimination



3. Helping people take control of their health



#### PRIORITY 1: Helping people access quality health and wellbeing services

##### What we'll support

- We want to find out which barriers are stopping people from using vital services, and work out how to break them down
- In the UK, our focus on 'services and resources' enables us to help people understand where help is available, how to access it and how to make sure it meets their individual needs. We'll also focus on prevention, early intervention and living well, while supporting initiatives that look at the person as a whole – understanding and tackling the social causes that are aggravating their health problems
- Internationally, we'll help people through a range of key life stages, getting involved with sexual, reproductive, maternal, new-born, child and adolescent health; as well as working with people affected by HIV. We'll support stronger health systems, particularly in community and primary care settings, improving both the supply and demand for better quality health services. We'll collaborate with key organisations, like government, private and not-for-profit providers, and encourage a joined up response through partnerships and collaboration. Where relevant, we will work with specific issues such as malaria and immunisation as entry points into broader strengthening of the health system



## PRIORITY 2: Tackling stigma and discrimination

### What we'll support

- Even when help is available, stigma and discrimination stop some of the most disadvantaged people from getting the support they desperately need, relating to both physical and mental health issues. We support projects that tackle this major barrier. In line with our approach that ensures we put people at the heart of everything we do, we believe people who've experienced health issues themselves are best placed to develop solutions. We will actively look to support organisations that are led by people with direct experience of the issues we want to tackle
- In the UK – we'll be focusing mainly on groups of marginalised people that we know find it hard to access support for their health and wellbeing needs, for example disabled people and refugees, asylum seekers and migrants (RASM). Around the world, a key focus will be people affected by HIV, including the most at risk and marginalised groups, such as sex workers, men who have sex with men (MSM) and injecting drug users. We'll also explore maternal health issues – from stillbirth to fistula – where discrimination can occur



## PRIORITY 3: Helping people take control of their health

### What we'll support

We believe individuals should be able to speak out and access what they need, where and when they need it – wherever they are in the world:

- In the UK we'll support work that helps people take control of their personal health needs. We'll help individuals, interest groups and organisations come together, identifying barriers and developing collaborative solutions
- Around the world we'll focus on low-cost models of care geared for local communities. We'll also strengthen community systems, helping integrate them into the health system, so individuals, families and communities can hold the relevant service providers to account, demanding high quality and relevant health care that really meets their needs



## BUILDING STRONGER COMMUNITIES IN AREAS OF DISADVANTAGE, DEPRIVATION AND POVERTY

### WHY FOCUS ON COMMUNITIES?

Modern life is placing unprecedented strains on communities – social structures are breaking down, people are struggling to make ends meet and there's little time for positive interactions. Isolation is all too common. Internationally, and in some places in the UK, particularly rural areas, there are added problems – with a lack of basic services and failing infrastructure. Yet, we believe that across the globe, communities are at the heart of successful, thriving societies. Strong communities are places where people feel safe and secure, where they can speak out and be listened to. They're places people can put down roots, have friends and have access to fundamental services, like adequate housing, utilities, infrastructure, education, health and social services, and where physical spaces are shared and nurtured. We'll work with disadvantaged and vulnerable communities to identify their strengths and overcome barriers to productivity, connection or community wellbeing.



## OUR PRIORITIES



1. Connected – improving inclusion and cohesion



2. Productive – supporting enterprise and skills development



3. Empowered – supporting community-led solutions to locally identified issues



### PRIORITY 1: Connected communities

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#### What we'll support

- In the UK, we'll support projects that improve inclusion and cohesion, helping people find common interests, overcome fear and misconceptions and make new connections. And we'll bring together all sorts of groups – from mixing different generations, to welcoming newly arrived refugees
- In the UK and internationally, we will support projects that strive to include the most marginalised groups, from disabled people to LGBT groups
- We may also support work to improve the connectedness of isolated communities – helping them to be more aware of their rights and entitlements. Internationally, we will also support the diaspora to add their unique experience, perspective, skills and commitment to supporting development within their communities of origin



### PRIORITY 2: Productive communities

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#### What we'll support

- We want to help create flourishing communities, where people feel they are personally thriving, while sharing a sense of purpose and prosperity – rather than just 'making ends meet'
- Internationally we'll work with projects that encourage economic self-sufficiency through employment and paid productivity. Internationally and in the UK, we'll invest in enterprises for social benefit
- We aim to support communities where we can add value and address key issues they have identified as their priorities; support testing and learning using local assets, people, places and businesses



### PRIORITY 3: Empowered communities

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#### What we'll support

- Building on our track record of working with marginalised and disadvantaged groups, we'll help communities develop a clear identity and powerful voice so they can take collective action
- As well as entire communities, this will include specific groups, such as disabled people, carers or women and girls. It will also include people 'outside' traditional community models, such as newly arrived refugees or people who are homeless
- Internationally, we'll work in urban slums and informal settlements where people struggle to access even basic services. We'll support community-led solutions and help civil society organisations hold service providers to account, tackling issues like better living standards and access to clean water and sanitation

To find out more about the work we do, or apply for a grant, go to [comicroelief.com/grants](https://comicroelief.com/grants)