

A young woman with short dark hair, wearing a pink headband, a pink sleeveless basketball jersey with a logo, green basketball shorts, and blue sneakers, is holding a basketball with both hands. She is standing on a reddish-brown dirt court. The background shows a blue sky with white clouds and some greenery.

**COMIC
RELIEF**

**SOCIAL
CHANGE
AT COMIC
RELIEF**

COMIC RELIEF IS A CREATIVE AGENCY FOR SOCIAL CHANGE



We recognise that social change is complex. It happens at many levels and in multiple ways. Sustainable change demands shifts in the structures that keep people locked in poverty, as well as easing the immediate suffering people face.

As one organisation we can't meet every need, but believe we have the potential to play a unique role in bringing about change.

We are committed to working towards our vision of a **Just World Free from Poverty**. That means funding amazing projects and organisations closest to the people with experience of the issues as well as expanding our role as an influencing organisation, amplifying our partners' voices and drawing on evidence and learning to achieve deeper change.

OUR SOCIAL CHANGE STRATEGY

Our strategy describes how we seek to make change in the world. It sets out a thematic focus on four issues that the entire organisation works together to address. It also explains our priority geographies for funding and the qualities that underpin the type of funder we aim to be.

We aim to contribute to social change by:

- **making financial investments in organisations doing great work in and with their communities**
- **bringing together the organisations we fund and other donors to share learning**
- **shaping attitudes, influencing wider policy, and creating space for policy change**
- **putting lived and learnt experience at the heart of the agenda**
- **supporting the future sustainability of the organisations we invest in.**

We focus on two things:

HOW: Ways we seek to drive change

WHAT: Challenges we seek to address



INFLUENCING AT COMIC RELIEF



Our definition of influence is **'when we intentionally target people or institutions to change their attitudes, behaviours or policy, to have a positive impact on the root causes affecting our social change goals.'**

We can influence in a unique way that is impact-led, intentional, bold, and draws on the organisation's assets, whilst remaining rooted in amplifying the efforts of those we invest in (collectively) and the issues we support.

Our influencing approach will be brought to life through four priority cross-organisation approaches:

- **Making the most of our investments**
- **Shaping attitudes**
- **Taking positions**
- **Promoting good practice.**

OUR FOCUS AREAS

Comic Relief is committed to a **Just World Free from Poverty**. From 2018–2028 we will focus on the most vulnerable and marginalised affected by the following challenges facing society today.

CHILDREN SURVIVE AND THRIVE

We believe that every child has the right to the best start in life.

We want all children in the first years of their life to have equitable access to quality health, nutrition, protection, care and stimulation that addresses their developmental needs.

We want parents and caregivers to be supported and engaged in nurturing care and positive parenting with their young children.

GLOBAL MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

We believe that every person has the right to quality mental health support where and when they need it.

We want people with mental health problems to be able to access the support they need to recover.

We want people with mental health problems to be empowered to speak out and to live free from stigma and discrimination.

We want mental health systems to be invested in, legal barriers removed, and policies improved.

FIGHTING FOR GENDER JUSTICE

We believe women and girls should have equal power and agency in decision-making at all levels.

We want all women and girls, both collectively and individually, to have equal power and agency in decision making at all levels.

We want the elimination of violence and discrimination based on gender.

SAFE PLACE TO BE

We believe everyone should have a safe, secure and decent place to call home.

We want people who have been forced from their homes to have access to the support they need to start a new life, free from conflict, persecution or trafficking.

We want safe, secure and decent shelter to be better recognised worldwide and implemented as a fundamental human right.

We also support the following approaches that cut across our focus areas:

Social Tech: We believe digital technology has the power to accelerate positive social change by helping people, organisations and communities do a better job.

Sport for Change: We believe sport and physical activity has the power to bring about positive change for individuals and communities.

Social Investment: We believe that repayable finance can help speed up impact and grow the sustainability of organisations dedicated to bringing about positive social change.

OUR STRATEGIC CONTEXT

COMIC RELIEF

A JUST WORLD FREE FROM POVERTY

through contributing to change in 4 focus areas:

GENDER JUSTICE

CHILDREN SURVIVE AND THRIVE

GLOBAL MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

A SAFE PLACE TO BE

By supporting a range of organisations...

In certain ways

Funding directly to UK communities and the global south

Offering more than just funding

Reaching grassroots organisations & movements

Being a flexible funder

Funding middle-income organisations

Around certain values

Participation and lived experience

More relational and trust-based

Learning-led approaches

And approaches

Alternative types of finance (Redshed)

Sport for Change

Social Tech

INFLUENCING, ATTITUDES, POLICIES AND BEHAVIOURS

As well as using our assets to influence directly through storytelling and policy engagement

WHERE WE PRIORITISE OUR INVESTMENT

Poverty and injustice are global issues so we want to see change both in the UK and internationally. All four of our priority funding issues are global in nature. However, we know that our funds will not achieve as much if spread too thinly so we don't directly invest funds in every country around the world.

The causes and consequences of poverty and injustice are inter-related and can be addressed most effectively by taking a holistic approach. That's why we invest our funding in the United Kingdom and several other countries where we support multiple partners.

We have a strong track record of investing in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. We currently focus our investment in the following countries, below:

These countries have been selected as our priority areas on a mixture of the following criteria:

- High levels of inequality (assessed based on a score below 0.5 on the Inequality Adjusted Human Development Index)
- High levels of poverty (assessed based on 15% or more of the population living under \$1.90 a day)
- Areas with an enabling environment for change and a healthy civil society (assessed as evolving or enhanced based on USAID CSO Sustainability Index)
- Breadth and longevity of Comic Relief's funding in the country against our chosen focal themes.



* England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland

QUALITIES WE'RE LOOKING FOR IN THE PARTNERS WE FUND

Over the years that we've been funding social change activity, we've learnt the qualities we think make the most consistent change:

1. Matching our mission

We look to build a family of funded partners that share our vision for a **Just World Free from Poverty** and are working toward meaningful change in our four focus areas.

2. Making change at different levels

We are committed to learning about different types of change. Whilst it is essential that all the work we fund is or has been informed by a grassroots understanding of service delivery and issues on the ground, our funded partners will be at different stages of the change they are working towards. This means we invest in a broad portfolio of work which might include, for example; immediate service delivery work, grassroots activism and movement building, strategic litigation or longer-term whole-system change.

3. Centred around people

We are looking for partners who demonstrate a commitment to putting the people they seek to serve at the heart of how decisions are made. This means that we work with partners closest to the problems and with demonstrable input and accountability from those they work on behalf of.

4. Risk Aware

We aim to develop trust-based relationships with our partners whilst developing and implementing robust governance, safeguarding and financial management practices.

5. Learning led

We are committed to learning from the expertise and experience of the partners we fund. We want to work with organisations who have a culture that values evidence and learning, is committed to continual improvement and sharing what they learn on the journey to impact.

6. Storytellers

We believe that effective storytelling and narratives can change the world. We want to build partnerships which support and improve our own and others' storytelling about the issues we work on. We care about investing in approaches where storytelling is rooted in the experience of those affected by the problems.

WAYS OF INVESTING

Intermediary partners

We look to fund work in partnership with local funders and platforms who are closer to the work and need on the ground. Partners with an annual income of less than £250k in the UK and £75k internationally can apply directly to these organisations for Comic Relief funding. This approach means the investments are based on a better and more locally based understanding of grassroots work. It also ensures that our team can develop more relational ways of working directly with the partners we invest in.

Co-funded initiatives

We understand the strength and potential impact of collaborative funding to help shift the dial on the issues we prioritise. To achieve that, we will partner with other funders, philanthropists, and organisations, to deliver specific funding programmes.

Middle-income organisations

We are committed to developing trust-based mutually rewarding relationships with our funded partners. In order to do that, it is important we make fewer, bigger, and longer investments. For that reason, whilst our grassroots funding is managed through locally based Intermediary funders, our direct investments are to middle-income organisations only, where we think our funding can have the greatest impact. This means we do not routinely fund large organisations with an annual turnover of over £10m.

Direct funding

We aim to invest our funding closer to the people directly affected by the issues. That means directly reaching communities across the UK, and investing in the global south rather than through UK-based international NGOs. As a UK-based international funder, influencer and storyteller we're working hard to better understand the power dynamics that position creates and our role in challenging and shifting them. In order to do that, we are continually learning about how we as a funder based in the global north can learn from and work with partners in the global south. We have a long way to go but we are getting better at listening and thinking about alternative gathering and telling of stories. We will continue to measure how well we are doing this.



OUR SOCIAL CHANGE COMMITMENT

As a creative agency for social change, Comic Relief will:

- work with partners towards systemic change, tackling the causes and consequences of injustice and poverty for the most vulnerable people
- use all our organisational assets to achieve a shared vision of social change
- provide a platform for people to make change, putting their experience and expertise at the heart of everything we do
- be a learning organisation; testing, researching, sharing and adapting, and demonstrate our contribution
- challenge ourselves to use the power we have carefully and considerately, whether that's in the funding we give or the stories we tell
- align our Social Change Strategy, wider Organisational Strategy and ways of working, and communicate these to all our stakeholders.



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Comic Relief is the operating name of Charity Projects, a registered charity.
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