



## **Comic Relief launches refreshed grants strategy: Working towards a world where all people are safe, healthy, educated and empowered**

**Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2016**

Comic Relief today introduces its new grants strategy, which will aim to fund new initiatives to help drive great ideas and sustainable change across all four nations of the UK and in some of the world's poorest communities. The strategy will also build upon the organisation's 30 years' experience by continuing to support existing partners and projects.

Red Nose Day and Sport Relief, Comic Relief's two major fundraising campaigns, are among the biggest events of their type in the world, having raised over £1bn in the last 30 years. Sport Relief 2016 has raised over £68m so far, with the money still coming in. This fundraising prowess has enabled Comic Relief to become one of the UK's leading independent grant making bodies.

The updated strategy has been developed in response to an ever-changing environment to enable Comic Relief to respond faster to the complex world we live in and maximise the impact made both in the UK and overseas.

These changes include the growth of incredible life-changing digital innovations, unprecedented mass movement of people, rapid urbanisation and the introduction of the universal Sustainable Development Goals. Meanwhile, extreme poverty and deprivation remain a devastating reality for millions of people around the world and far too many people remain at threat from serious diseases such as malaria and HIV. In the UK, families face growing challenges including mental health issues, lack of opportunities for young people, dementia and ageing. Charities are confronted by greater and increasingly complex need, often with declining resources.

In order to pursue Comic Relief's vision of 'A Just World Free From Poverty' - where everyone is safe, healthy, educated and empowered - grant making will be focussed on four key programme areas both in the UK and around the world:

- 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

People will be at the heart of Comic Relief's new grant making approach, working in stronger partnerships with funded organisations to co-create initiatives, helping people find their own solutions to the challenges they face.

This approach can be seen in practice through the programmes Comic Relief is funding that help to empower women and girls and provide them with the tools and confidence to be free to lead the lives they choose. To maximise the impact these programmes will have, Comic Relief will work closely with partner organisations across cities in the UK and overseas to reduce the risk of girls and young women being drawn into gangs and prevent them coming to harm or suffering from sexual exploitation or forced criminal activity. Funding will be awarded to a small number of initiatives each involving a variety of partners, in order to identify what interventions work best in this challenging area.

The application process has also been streamlined to ensure organisations can apply as easily as possible, whilst ensuring that all grants remain subject to rigorous scrutiny to ensure that donations are used in the most effective way possible. These new processes will ensure that funding reaches the people who need it most even more rapidly and also that smaller organisations who apply are able to be better supported.

Comic Relief will also continue in its pioneering role of funding programmes that support 'Tech for Good' and 'Sport for Change'. Comic Relief understands how important digital technology is in modern life, and recognises its potential to address some of the biggest solutions and challenges out there. Targeted funding aims to make the best use of digital technology to create social change. Projects that harness the power and passion of sport will continue to be funded, helping to bring about positive change in the lives of individuals and communities in the UK and around the world.

**Lenny Henry, trustee and co-founder of Comic Relief, said:** "Since Comic Relief was created over 30 years ago, we have always prided ourselves on being a charity that responds to the world around us and listens to the changing needs of the people and organisations we set out to help. The new Comic Relief grants strategy has been designed in response to the ever changing world around us, so that we can continue to work towards our vision of 'A Just World, Free from Poverty' in which everyone is safe, healthy, educated and empowered."

**Judith McNeill, Comic Relief Grants Director, said:** "These are exciting, challenging and changing times. Comic Relief is still passionate about helping people make a difference and achieve the changes they want to see, for themselves, their families and communities. We want to be more flexible, agile and proactive than ever before with this new strategy. Building on our 30 years of experience, we will continue to fund established and new initiatives that drive sustainable change and transform lives both here in the UK and around the world."

Comic Relief is now welcoming proposals from organisations under our four programme areas. For full details and to apply, visit [www.comicrelief.com](http://www.comicrelief.com)

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## **NOTES TO EDITORS:**

### **About Comic Relief**

Comic Relief is a UK charity, which aims to create a just world, free from poverty. Since 1985, Comic Relief has raised over £1billion. That money has helped, and is helping, people living incredibly tough lives, both at home in the UK and across the world.

For information about Comic Relief and the work it carries out, please visit [www.comicrelief.com](http://www.comicrelief.com)

Comic Relief, registered charity 326568 (England/Wales); SC039730 (Scotland)