

5:41 – 5:44 PM– Ms Chimwala will talk about how to achieve inclusion in education and health and achieve resilient societies through partnerships

3 minutes of speaking time = maximum 400 words

Thank you, moderator. I would like to draw upon a couple of scenarios from our work in Malawi to address this question.

Acutely aware of the education gaps and challenges that we face in our country, for instance the significant inequalities in the education system amongst children from marginalized background; up to 11% of the 4,500,000 learners in primary schools now dropped out of school.

Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) through the volunteering approach has been working to improve both access and inclusion to education, and engaging partners from the ministry of education at the national level; to parents and communities at the district and community level to respond to the needs of different learners.

VSO's inclusive education programme has ensured that teachers receive specialist training, and that schools receive resources to teach students with diverse needs and learning styles. The programme has also advocated for empowerment to parents and school management committees to assert their children's right to education in inclusive settings. In so doing, the entire community — including social workers, mother groups, and representatives of parents and teacher associations — are working together and participate in the design, delivery, and monitoring of education, thereby reframing inclusive education as a shared responsibility. At the higher level, the programme holds the governments accountable for implementing antidiscrimination legislation, legal mandates for inclusion, and policies to remove barriers especially for learners with different learning difficulties or special needs.

In the area of health, VSO in partnership with the ministry of Health (MOH) VSO in partnership with the ministry of health is supporting young people to monitor the delivery of health services in their district. VSO's youth champions at district level pose as diversity and inclusion ambassadors, bringing cultural awareness and perspectives to the forefront for members of youth clubs and youth networks. They are able to challenge ingrained ways of providing services that can leave vulnerable populations feeling uneasy.

Critical for the success of this work is our partnership with the government to ensure appropriate policy frameworks are enforced, programme sustainability strategies and political buy in. Secondly, using the volunteer methodology, volunteers play a critical, and often under-recognised and under-utilised role in the delivery and the implementation of the SDGs. Through harnessing their power, community connections and strengths we can genuinely make strides to achieve the ambition of SDGs. We are seeing disabled students who are now able to access learning materials, teachers who now feel confident in communicating with their students for the first time and young people empowered to access their sexual and reproductive rights- thus reducing infections and teenage pregnancies.

VSO's and other volunteers strengthen community's ability to not only recover from a crisis or stress but prepare for or prevent one in the future towards sustainable development. Our global Standard for Responsible & Impactful volunteering is showing promise to help improve the quality of volunteer contributions to SDG implementation through national plans and positioning of primary actors to hold duty bearers to account for SDGs delivery through an empowering process called measuring impact for learning and empowerment (MILE).

Final reflections

To achieve resilient societies, a key plan of action for all stakeholders (government, VIOs, and parastatals) is the Continued support to local networks particularly youth clubs and youth groups; the need for health system strengthening, especially at community level and household resilience to better manage future pandemics and other emergencies, shocks, and spikes; as well as Make 'Leave No one Behind' a central pillar of all public policy.