London, UK: It’s two o’clock in the afternoon and Sophie Hanson is running a marathon. She’s wearing a T-shirt that says ‘Go the Extra Mile’, but she’s feeling tired.

She grabs a bottle of water, takes a long drink and carries on. By the time she finishes, she will have raised £200.

Halfway around the world, in Sierra Leone, Africa, Mohammed Koroma is thirsty. It’s 30 degrees outside, so he picks up a cup of water and takes a long drink. The water is from a new well in his village, so it isn’t contaminated.

He will be going to school again at 8 a.m. tomorrow.
Sophie and Mohammed are two teenagers with very different lives, but their lives are connected through charity. Sophie is taking part in a huge national event that raises money for people in the UK and abroad – a sponsored run for Sport Relief. Mohammed’s village has a new well that was paid for with money from the same event. Every year, Sport Relief and its sister charity, Comic Relief, raise money for good causes. (3) These events include marathons and football matches, talent shows and baking competitions, and when they are all completed, they will have raised over £50 million. That’s enough money to transform the lives of thousands of people. (4)

According to recent research, the UK is the fifth most generous nation in the world. Charities are an important part of British society, and some of the world’s biggest and most famous organizations, such as Oxfam and Save the Children, started in the UK. Today, there are over 160,000 charities, and more than three quarters (79%) of people donate money or volunteer time every month. Many people make regular donations to big charities that aid poor people in different countries. (5) Smaller charities, such as sports projects or hospices, address more local issues and rely on smaller events, like car boot sales and fun runs. They also rely on volunteers for the day-to-day running of these projects.
Teenagers play a big role in this culture of giving. A recent World Vision study showed that 69% of teens are aware of the needs of others thanks to the internet and globalization. And although teens may not have much money to give, they often help in other ways.

In the UK, more than a third of teenagers have given time to charities in the last year. In fact, supporting a charity is part of everyday life, and young people are the new champions of this culture. ‘I feel good when I do something,’ explains Sophie after the race. ‘I read about so many problems in the news – at home and abroad. Often, I feel helpless. I don’t have a lot of money, but then I can volunteer, I can get sponsors and I can make a difference.’ Back in Sierra Leone, Mohammed is smiling.

**Charity in numbers**

160,000 charities in the UK raise £37 billion every year.
13.2 million people volunteer for charities.
Charity shops raise £200 million every year.
The biggest charities like Oxfam, Cancer Research and the RSPCA raise more than £10 million a year.