

Saga urges Britain's over-50s to help the developing world

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Emma Soames of Saga is urging Britain's 21 million over-50s to help change the lives of thousands of people in developing countries.

As a trustee of the Saga Charitable Trust, Emma has visited some of the villages where the charity carries out valuable work. She was also present when Princess Anne visited one of the projects in Zambia, as part of this year's Diamond Jubilee Tour.

She says she is proud to be part of an organisation that changes people's lives by offering new opportunities and giving greater hope for a brighter future. Now she is urging Britain's over-50s to get involved too, through Saga Volunteering Holidays and the Saga Charitable Trust.

She said: "Volunteering in this country is huge and it's a natural extension to want to take your skills and do it abroad where the need is so enormous and the help we provide is not just a drop in the ocean, nor a drop of water in the desert, it's a drop falling into thirsty mouths.

Our volunteers bring the benefit of their insight and experience from a British working environment to these projects. The advantages to the volunteers are enormous, both in practical ways, but also in building relationships with people who have a completely different lifestyle, so it's a great benefit for everybody. The volunteers definitely benefit from it as much as the projects themselves."

With Saga, volunteers combine foreign travel with helping others at one of the nine projects across five countries in the developing world - Sri Lanka, Nepal, St. Lucia, South Africa and Zambia. They pay to stay in hotels and are therefore supporting the local economy. But instead of relaxing on the beach, they spend their time sharing their skills and experience.

Emma says: "Much of the work they do is in schools, but they also work in health clinics and orphanages. Careful matching before they leave makes sure that their skills are placed where they can be of greatest help.

Saga is particularly keen to encourage more men to take part as they can be male role models to children in the projects, many of whom are fatherless.

As well as being an exciting and adventurous experience, it also certainly makes one question one's attitudes to life, seeing how little people have and their immense resilience and cheerfulness in conditions that would defeat Westerners."

The Saga Charitable Trust has launched a Christmas Appeal and is asking for donations: no matter how big or small, the Trust says every gift will make a real difference to its work. Saga Group covers all administrative costs so that every penny donated goes to the projects it supports.

The Saga Charitable Trust helps thousands of children and adults in desperate need in seventeen countries. In many areas, it gives food, water, shelter and safety for severely disadvantaged children.

It provides education, skills and healthcare facilities. However, it does not simply donate money. The Trust invests in sustainable projects that will empower and support local people. It also develops opportunities for communities to benefit from tourism.

The Princess Royal visited one such community in Zambia this year as part of the Diamond Jubilee celebrations. In Mukuni Village, the Saga Charitable Trust, with the Butterfly Tree project, has funded a health centre and maternity clinic, helped develop the local school and donated funds to build a bore hole which will provide clean safe drinking water.

Volunteering abroad can be a life-enhancing experience – for you, as well as for the people you help.

You can donate through JustGiving:

<http://www.justgiving.com/SCTChristmasAppeal2012>

For more information on Saga Volunteering Holidays:

<http://travel.saga.co.uk/holidays/partner-discounts/saga-volunteer-travel.aspx>

NOTES

Emma Soames is available for interview on Tuesday 18th December, to talk about the work of the Saga Charitable Trust, including the visit to Mukuni village in Zambia, which the Princess Royal visited as part of the Diamond Jubilee celebrations.

Emma, granddaughter of Winston Churchill, is a Trustee of the Saga Charitable Trust, and Editor-at-large of Saga Magazine.

See her blog here...

<http://www.saga.co.uk/saga-charitable-foundation/fundraising-fortnight/emma-soames-zambia-blogs/emma-soames-zambia-b>

Also available for interview on 18th December is Lesley Piper, from Newark, who trained as a nursery school teacher, but who spent much of her working life as a branch manager for a Building Society. She has volunteered at Naxal Orphanage in Kathmandu, Nepal, where she ran an arts and crafts group for children aged from 18 months to 17 years. Lesley is married with three children and 5 grandchildren and officially retired twice. She still works in order to fund her annual trips with Saga Volunteer Travel when she again uses the skills she originally learnt during her nursery school training. She has worked at an HIV Aids Centre in a township in Port Elizabeth, South Africa and at a primary school in St Lucia where she ran remedial classes. In 2013 she is going on a volunteering holiday in Sri Lanka.

VIDEO CLIPS of Emma Soames, interviewed by Karen Bowerman, are available for use. The full interview is on Saga's YouTube Channel as well as an interview with a Saga volunteer, June Snowden, which is also available for broadcast. June lives in East Anglia and has now made six visits to the Dunnottar School in St Lucia which educates children and young people with development disabilities. On her visits she helps the principal by keeping the school accounts up to date, works on other projects in the office and assists the teachers. She also fundraises for the school. She recently undertook a sponsored swim which

has so far raised nearly £600.

<http://www.youtube.com/user/SagaGroup>

PHOTOGRAPHS are available for publication and can be found at the end of the Emma Soames/Karen Bowerman interview on Saga's YouTube channel. The captions are as follows:

- 1) Emma Soames
 - 2) Volunteer Mrs Emily Eaton-Cooper from Thalwila Wella School in Sri Lanka
 - 3) Mr and Mrs Willbraham and Mrs Rosemary on her first Saga Volunteer Trust Trip to Morne Doudon School in St Lucia
 - 4) Mrs Sandra Willbraham and children at Thalwila Wella School in Sri Lanka
 - 5) Mrs Sandra and Bill Willbraham and Mrs Pauline Reynolds at Thalwila Wella School in Sri Lanka
- Pictures 6,7,8,9,10,11 are from Morne Doudon School in St Lucia
- 12) Emma Soames in Zambia
 - 13) Jane Kaye Bailey founder of Butterfly Tree, with the headmaster of Mukuni School and Emma Soames
- More photographs are available on request.

CONTACT For media enquiries and to book Emma Soames or Saga volunteer Lesley Piper for interview on 18th December, please contact:

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