

DISABILITY

VSO supports disabled people to participate as equal members in their families, communities and societies.

INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

2007/08 was a significant year for the international disability movement. The ratification of the 2006 UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities provided a focus for governments and disability organisations around the world; international guidelines for community-based rehabilitation were established; and the Africa Campaign on Disability and HIV and AIDS gained visibility and momentum.



OUR ACHIEVEMENTS IN DISABILITY

VSO's corporate programme objectives offer direction to our country programmes as they develop strategies to address specific contexts and needs. This year, VSO's work in disability was driven by three objectives, outlined below, and a number of success indicators. The following provides a summary of a larger report and offers key examples of success rather than a complete picture.

Countries where VSO works in disability are The Gambia, Ghana, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Namibia, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, Uganda and Vietnam.

1 SUPPORT 45 DISABLED PEOPLE'S ORGANISATIONS, NETWORKS AND NATIONAL FEDERATIONS IN EIGHT COUNTRIES TO REPRESENT AND ADVOCATE MORE EFFECTIVELY FOR THEIR MEMBERS, PARTICULARLY WOMEN

Exceeding our objective, 49 partners in ten countries received VSO support this year and 80 per cent of programmes reported real improvements in the quality of work of direct benefit to disabled people.

- **Disabled people living in districts and villages are able to participate in advocacy activity.** In Ghana, VSO volunteers supported the Central Disability Network and its regional offices to open branches in districts around the country where the most disadvantaged people could be supported. The network helps disabled people understand their rights and encourages them to make the most of opportunities to represent themselves. Following awareness-raising activity, the Volta region network reported increased involvement of women in the political activities and 18 women went on to be elected to committees during local government elections.
- **Disabled people's organisations develop strategies to manage new and existing members.** In Rwanda, following the newly published Disability Law and government decentralisation, VSO worked at a number of levels to offer significant input into the restructure of the country's disability movement. Volunteers helped government officials organise the first elections of disabled people to sector, national and district committees; a national confederation of 416 disabled people, representative of all communities and types of impairment, was created and its strategic plan developed; and the purpose of the General Association of Disabled People was reviewed – its new focus of community-based support and advocacy has already reached 2,733 men, 3,436 women and 126 local authorities. Crucially, communication between all these partners ensures activities are harmonised and offer the best possible support to disabled people.

2 SUPPORT 31 PARTNERS IN SEVEN COUNTRIES TO DEVELOP COMMUNITY-BASED REHABILITATION STRATEGIES THAT MEET THE NEEDS OF DISABLED PEOPLE, PARTICULARLY WOMEN

In 2007/8, seven VSO country programmes have worked with 32 partners. The greatest success was achieved through work alongside government institutions and local authorities to improve the availability of services for disabled people. Improvements in the quality of care delivered by civil society organisations following staff training initiatives have also been significant.

- **Through VSO support, government ministries take responsibility for coordination of community-based rehabilitation services.** In Guyana, VSO supported the expansion of Ministry of Health rehabilitation services to previously un-served and under-served regions by training 100 national volunteers to deliver basic rehabilitation care. In addition, 109 teachers and parents have been trained to undertake basic eye tests and have gone on to screen 4,300 children so far. Where necessary, the children are now sent to a clinic for treatment. Such initiatives ensure the local community and national volunteers work effectively with and support the government to deliver care.
- **Through review of strategies and services, civil society organisations provide better rehabilitation services.** Indian civil society organisation EKTA delivers care to disabled children with the aim of helping them become more independent. A volunteer-led training programme focused on improving the physiotherapy techniques of key staff, who went on to share their new skills with other colleagues. As a result of improvements in the therapy offered, 90 per cent of the children in the cerebral palsy unit can now feed themselves independently.

3 INCLUDE DISABLED PEOPLE AS VOLUNTEERS AND STAFF WITHIN VSO AND CONSIDER THE NEEDS OF DISABLED PEOPLE IN PROGRAMME WORK IN ALL GOALS

- **VSO programme offices and communications are accessible to disabled people.** Programme offices continued to improve the accessibility of their offices and a central fund to support this was over subscribed. In Mongolia, the VSO programme office established a disability advisory committee, with representation from disabled people's organisations, which is mandated to advise VSO on accessibility and inclusion.
- **Other goal areas work hard to address the needs of disabled people.** Internationally, programmes focused on other areas of development are now working with a greater number of partners who focus their services on disabled people. In Nigeria, VSO organised the first workshop on disability for partners in the HIV and AIDS programme. The workshop explored perceptions of HIV risk in relation to disabled people and the findings are being used to draft practical guidance on tailoring messages around safe sex and HIV care and treatment for disabled people.

FUTURE DIRECTION

VSO will continue to build on these corporate objectives to help national governments and civil society organisations support disabled people effectively. Specific areas for consideration include:

- take into account the growth in international advocacy and involvement in campaigns, such as the Africa Campaign on Disability and HIV and AIDS, as we develop country-specific advocacy strategies with partner organisations
- explore further opportunities to work closely with other goal groups in VSO to ensure disabled people are regarded as a key beneficiary group
- include disabled people as staff and volunteers in the work and success of VSO.