

Programme Area Summary

Country: Bangladesh

Programme Area: HIV & AIDS

What is the aim of the programme area?

To work towards the creation of an enabling environment in which the most vulnerable people living with HIV & AIDS can assert and protect their rights, and in which the personal, social and economic impact of HIV & AIDS can be mitigated in Bangladesh.

Why is VSO working in this particular programme area and region?

The HIV epidemic is now taking shape in Bangladesh, with a concentrated epidemic amongst injecting drug users being reported in major urban cities (reaching 8.9% prevalence at one location in Dhaka city). The latest projections (based on existing prevalence and behavioural data) predict that HIV prevalence will rise to a total number of 50,000 cumulative infections within 5 years in Bangladesh. According to these projections, people who inject drugs, followed closely by males who have sex with males and female sex workers will be most affected.

As a result, VSO programme focuses on working with these vulnerable groups: injecting drug users, sex workers, males who have sex with males and people living with HIV & AIDS. VSOB is committed supporting those most vulnerable to assert and protect their rights - to achieve health, and mitigate the effects of HIV & AIDS. Given that these populations are largely concentrated in urban areas, VSOB is currently working in partnership with organizations working in the major centres of Dhaka, Chittagong and Bogra.

Key beneficiaries and partners

VSO works with NGOs that provide HIV prevention & care services to the following key beneficiaries:

- Injecting drug users
- Sex workers
- Males who have sex with males
- People living with HIV & AIDS

Current Partners:

- Ashar Alo Society (AAS)
- Aparajeyo Bangladesh (AB)
- Bandhu Social Welfare Society (BSWS)
- Bangladesh Women's Health Coalition (BWHC)
- HIV/AIDS and STD Alliance Bangladesh (HASAB)
- Health and Education for the Less Privileged People (HELP)
- Light House
- Mukto Akash Bangladesh (MAB)
- Padakhep Manabik Unnyan Kandra (PMUK)
- Population Services and Training Centre (PSTC)
- Shapla Mohila Sangstha (SMS)
- Young Power in Social Action (YPSA)

Key objectives of the programme and the cross-cutting themes

- To effectively advocate at all levels for supportive policies for those most vulnerable and people living with HIV & AIDS.
- To develop local capacity to effectively respond to the HIV & AIDS epidemic.

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- To contribute to improved access to services for prevention, care and support for HIV & AIDS.
- To encourage the greater involvement of people living with HIV & AIDS and vulnerable groups.
- Gender is a cross cutting theme of all VSOB programmes.

Current programme activities

Focus of International Volunteer Placements

- On the job training and development through long term volunteer placements
- Short term volunteer placements (to address discrete skills gaps)

Workshops, training & conferences

- Quarterly Strategic focus group meetings (programme monitoring & information exchange)
- Support to conference attendance and supplementary training
- Capacity building in advocacy

Advocacy and Global Education

- Gender mainstreaming

Partner exchange visits/study tours

- Networking and exchange amongst partners and volunteers

Providing grants and/or equipment for partners

- Small grants funding

What makes VSO's work in this programme area special?

VSO's distinct contribution to the development of Bangladesh is volunteering. Volunteers can play a unique role in sustained capacity building through on-the-job mentoring, training and guidance for lasting change at the organizational, programme and community level. To augment the process of capacity building, VSO Bangladesh also supports advocacy, gender mainstreaming, networking between programme stakeholders, and the exchange of good practice.