

Country: China

Programme Area (and timescale of plan): National Volunteering (2007-10)

What is the aim of the programme area? To promote volunteering in China as an effective way of reducing poverty and disadvantage.

Why is VSO working in that particular Programme Area and region? Volunteering is the core of VSO's approach to fighting poverty around the world. For fifty years and more, VSO has matched many thousands of volunteers to development needs in least developed countries. More recently it has complimented its international volunteering approach with the support of national and Diaspora volunteering; volunteers volunteering in their own country or in their country of heritage.

Since 2007, VSO China has embraced that approach to supporting and promoting national volunteering; recognising the opportunities for volunteering *in* China and overseas *from* China.

Volunteering in China is emerging as a strong force for development. It is seen as an important approach to bridge the economic and social inequities that have grown between rural and urban, east and west and rich and poor since China's 'opening up' and reform policy. And we've seen wonderful expressions of volunteering and potential for volunteering in events like the Beijing Olympics.

However, volunteer organisations in China lack capacity in organisational development, volunteer programme management and in building partnerships. There are big opportunities for coordination and collaboration among grassroots NGOs and government organized NGOs (GONGOs). Addressing these capacity needs and seizing the opportunities for collaboration will play an important role in the development of volunteering in China.

Complementary to the principle of a "harmonious socialist society", is the development of Corporate Social Responsibility. The Chinese government has issued a series of regulations and rules to create an enabling environment for enterprise to perform their social responsibilities. Charitable donations from the private sector have been steadily increasing in China and employee volunteering and community development is growing. But companies are finding it difficult to find NGOs with capacity to deliver their programmes.

VSO's decades of experience in volunteering programmes is well recognized, and there is a role for VSO to play in China today in capacity building and the promotion of volunteering, as well as in bridging the connection between government, corporates and communities.

Key objectives of the current (2007-2010) programme ;

Objective 1 – Capacity Building:

To support capacity building of volunteer organizations (both Volunteer Involving Organizations and Volunteer Placing Organizations) that will result in the increased placement of volunteers, improved capacity of organizational development and service to disadvantaged sectors

Objective 2: - Promotion

To improve the understanding of volunteering and contribute to the creation of an enabling environment for volunteering in China, by engaging the public through communication, information and education.

Objective 3 - Networking

To provide a platform for volunteering organizations, corporates, government officials and the public to network together, and create opportunities for communication, coordination and collaboration.

Current programme partners:

Partner Organisation	Target Group/Beneficiaries
Shaanxi Western Development Foundation	Disabled people, volunteers and NGOs in Shaanxi and Western provinces.
China Muslim Web	Muslim volunteers, the disadvantaged in rural and urban communities,
Huizeren Social Service Centre	Volunteers from university and corporates. Disadvantaged youth in urban communities, and Volunteer Involving Organisations.
Red Phoenix Project	Poor female students in colleges and universities
Home AIDS Consoling Service Centre	The youth, PLWHA, drug-users, sex workers, and homosexual people.
China Social Entrepreneur Foundation	Poor & disadvantaged people in disaster-prone rural regions
Volunteer Committee, China Social Worker Association	Public in general and disadvantaged groups, e.g. elderly people in communities

Current (2007-2010) programme activities

(1) Capacity Building through International Volunteer Experts

We have developed long-term and short-term international volunteer placements to support our partners. Known as volunteering development volunteers (VDVs), the volunteers include where possible Diaspora volunteers.

International volunteers are focused on building the capacity of partner organizations in:

- Programme development and management
- Volunteer management systems
- Resource mobilization
- Organizational development

Specific actions have included building the capacity of local volunteer centres in Shaanxi and Beijing and the capacity of the national Muslim community networks.

(2) Workshops, training & conferences

- To strengthen the volunteer management capability;
- To train trainers in volunteering, volunteer management system, and leadership;
- To share experiences and knowledge in programme development and management;
- To promote volunteering by engaging youth and corporate sectors.

(3) Partner exchange visits/study tours:

- LINKS study tour for partners to learn from experiences of other countries;
- Knowledge based partnerships that promote mutual learning and sharing among VSO partners from different countries.

(4) Small grants and/or equipment for partners

(5) Publications and materials for training or communication:

- VSO supported compilation and publication of Volunteer Training Manual;
- A volunteer management handbook and VMS training manual

(6) Research

- Corporate Employee volunteering practises

(7) Networking , Advocacy and Global Education:

- Advocacy to develop an enabling environment for volunteering
- Raising the awareness of young people about development in their local communities and in other parts of the world, through the Global Xchange Programme.

What makes VSO's work in this programme area special? What is VSO's unique contribution in this programme area? Anything pioneering, controversial, new and interesting to say about development or volunteering?

VSO is unique in the experience it brings in volunteering for development. Leveraging that breadth and depth of knowledge is tremendously valued in China.

And as VSO China begins the implementation of its new programme strategy, focused on National Volunteering, the NV programme has already been pioneering a number of significant new approaches and products, including;

- **International Volunteering from China**, through the recruitment of Chinese volunteers to serve in long term volunteering placements overseas or through shorter term Youth exchange programmes.
- **2010 Volunteering Expo**; a unique to China forum, celebrating and inspiring volunteering.
- A Chinese version of the globally popular **Barefoot Guide** to organizational development.

The VSO China National Volunteering approach is at the heart of VSO's future programme in China. Reflecting that, this programme outline will be further developed in the coming month, as the strategy becomes a five year operational plan

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