

Final DFID PPA Evaluation

VSO

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Maureen O'Flynn
Elimu
Littletown Lane
Wootton Bridge
Isle of Wight PO334RR
Tel: 00441983 882734
Mobile: 07731915972

CONTENTS

	Page
Section 1: Executive Summary	3
Section 2: Introduction, purpose and methodology	5
Section 3: Results	6
3.1 VSO Programmes	6
3.11 Partner capacity	8
3.12 Impact of VSO Strategies on Partner Organisations	9
3.13 Contributions to Change at Beneficiary Level	9
3.14 Approaches to Development	9
3.2 Policy development and advocacy	10
3.3 Impact of PPA on overall health of the organisation since 2008	11
Section 4: Value for Money	12
4.1 Cost-effectiveness	12
4.11 Relationship between cost and outcomes	12
4.12 Cost-effectiveness of volunteering as a VSO development intervention	13
4.2 Efficiency	13
Section 5: Building Support for Development	14
5.1 Introduction	14
5.2 Results	14
5.3 Other achievements	15
Section 6: Lessons learned	15
6.1 VSO programmes	15
6.11 Partner capacity	15
6.12 Impact of VSO Strategies	16
6.13 Approaches to Development	16
6.2 Policy development and advocacy	17
6.3 Impact of PPA on overall health of organisation	17
6.4 Value for Money	18
6.5 Building Support for Development	18
Section 7: Issues to be addressed	18
7.1 VSO programmes	19
7.2 Policy and advocacy	20
7.3 Value for Money	20
7.4 Building Support for Development	20
Section 8: Annexes	21
Annex 1: Terms of Reference for DFID PPA final Examination	21
Annex 2: Record of people interviewed for the examination	25
Annex 3: Documents reviewed	28
Annex 4: Timeline of the evaluation and field trip schedules	29
Annex 5: Methodology of the New Economics Foundation evaluation – Value for Money	32
Annex 6: The VSO advocacy scale	34
Annex 7: Acronyms	35

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SECTION 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Verifying outcomes: Nepal and Ethiopia were visited to verify outcomes in HIV, and Education respectively. In relation to HIV & AIDS, the evaluation found that it can confidently verify the outcomes stated in the 2010 Self-Assessment Report. In interviews with seven partner organisations, evaluators were impressed by the capacity, confidence and credibility of six of them; the seventh being in process of redefining its purpose and objectives. All partners demonstrated a confidence and passion for development and change.

In relation to education, the evaluation found that it can verify the outcome stated in the 2010 Self-Assessment Report. Particularly noted is VSO's very strong relationship with the Ministry of Education and the improved school enrolment rate of girls. Where VSO is working effectively in this area, progress against indicators was good.

Partner capacity: These findings were reflected in the overall positive outcomes for VSO. VSO works with a very wide range of partners across numerous sectors. This diversity is reflected in different approaches to partner capacity development. Overall, VSO plays a small but significant role in building capacity across its chosen sectors (programme areas). VSO values its relationships with partners at all levels. Its organisational development and capacity-building strategies respond to partners' changing needs and contribute to their improved capacity, confidence, credibility and motivation. For example, departments and institutions within the education sector, as well as CBOs, have become stronger and more skilled.

Contributions to change at beneficiary level: The evaluation confirmed that improved partner capacity contributes to some changes in the lives of beneficiaries. In relation to HIV & AIDS, this is largely due to involving target groups in the management and governance of projects that are designed to meet their needs. For education – although it takes time for the impact of these efforts to be seen (and the period 2008–10 is unrealistic in this respect) – there are positive signs among some key beneficiaries. Access to education has increased dramatically in many countries and the focus now needs to be on quality. For the beneficiaries of the disability programme, there has been a remarkable increase in scale and reach relating to women and men with disabilities. People reported dramatic changes in their awareness of their rights and in their self-confidence, their ability to participate in the community and increased opportunities to access livelihood, health and education services.

Approaches to development

Key capacities: VSO's distinctive approach to development is through capacity building of partners. This is based on the belief that this method is the most sustainable and equitable way to realise the rights of poor and marginalised people. The evaluation confirmed that this is a sound approach; and considered the strengths and weaknesses of the VSO package (volunteers, role of the national office, small grants, exchanges, etc) in Section 6.

In terms of scale and reach, VSO programme staff and partners have defined criteria for how numbers of direct and indirect beneficiaries reached are reported in the context of each of the three goals. Progress has been good year on year. VSO needs to continue to work on refining and building capacity to ensure that figures are accurate.

Across all sectors, and often related to VSO efforts to promote gender and inclusion, more women, girls and other marginalised groups are able to access relevant services. Efforts in disability and HIV & AIDS in particular has led to greater inclusion of women and marginalised groups in the management and governance of CBOs. Efforts in these areas need to continue to increase reach and

ensure greater involvement of these groups in their own development; and that quality and relevance of services continues to improve. Gender needs to be more explicit within VSO's approaches.

Building support for development: In relation to scale and reach for each year and for each indicator, VSO performed well against its targets – this may indicate that the targets were set too low. However, results were encouraging, both for the figures themselves and because it was the first time that VSO has ever been able to quantify the scale and reach of its efforts. Based on this evidence, VSO has been able to explore different approaches to working through different target groups to promote development awareness to previously unreachable groups. In 2009 and 2010, innovative and successful areas of work were developed with new target groups, such as Diaspora groups within the UK and Political Volunteers.

Value for Money: VSO has demonstrated good Value for Money in respect to its procurement, practices and management of fiduciary risk – it is a cost-efficient organisation. The link between costs and outcomes needs more research, and this research must reflect the current debates in this area. The core volunteering intervention of VSO is very good for Value for Money when compared to other similar support. Again, further research needs to be carried out in this area.

Impact of the PPA on VSO organisational development and overall health of VSO M&E systems: VSO believes that the PPA grant has given the organisation the space and flexibility to expand. It has become a more coherent, innovative and programme-focused organisation, that is responsive to country and partner needs. In terms of Monitoring & Evaluation, there have been some direct results of the PPA requirement to extend the assessment of outcomes to beneficiary level. VSO and its partners have developed strong baselines informed by their target groups, and set up and embedded effective reporting systems into existing systems and processes. This has meant developing conceptual clarity around outcomes, developing advocacy success scales and learning how to report on Building Support for Development. The organisation noted that there are still areas where it needed to streamline and rationalise its reporting procedures.

SECTION 2: INTRODUCTION, PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose and scope of the evaluation

As part of the PPA funding arrangement with DFID, it was agreed that all PPA holders would, in the last year of funding, arrange for an independent external evaluation of the PPA for the period 2008–11. This evaluation will use the most recent version of the VSO PPA performance framework.

Over the period that this evaluation covered, VSO had received a total of nearly £90m from DFID. This represented 48% of VSO's total global income.¹

The **purpose** of this evaluation was to re-confirm the common ethos and vision in recognised priority areas that exist between VSO and DFID, which led to the formulation of the current PPA.

The **objective** of the evaluation was to evaluate how far VSO had gone towards achieving the mutually agreed outcomes as stated in the PPA performance framework. The evaluation also derived lessons, which will enable VSO to inform its future strategies, programmes and approaches.²

Target audience: The target audience, and main users of the findings of the evaluation, will be VSO and the Civil Society Team at DFID. However, VSO partners and other stakeholders may also benefit from the findings (this could include, but is not limited to, southern partners of VSO, other donors, other parts of DFID and fellow PPA holders).

Methodology: The spirit of this evaluation was one of shared learning rather than one of judgement of success and failure. Where appropriate, an adapted appreciative enquiry approach to interviews and focus group discussions was applied.

Personnel: Having developed the TOR for this evaluation, VSO selected three evaluators to fulfil different roles in the evaluation process:

- Maureen O'Flynn, an independent consultant, acted as lead evaluator, collecting and collating a substantial part of the evidence, and analysing and reporting on all the findings.
- Joe McMartin, Programme Development Team Leader for the Policy Department at VSO, accompanied Maureen throughout the evaluation, specifically to ensure that learnings would be built into VSO's approaches, strategies and processes.
- The Value for Money (VfM) component of the evaluation was assessed independently by a different set of evaluators, the New Economics Foundation (NEF).

Secondary research: This was conducted through the following processes:

- A review of monitoring reports (Programme Area Reviews, Impact Assessment reports by sample country, quantitative data, Partnership Review Reports and focus group summary reports, received by VSO from the partners and/or programme offices)
- A review of a range of evaluations of VSO-supported initiatives
- A review of the annual PPA Self-Assessment reports that VSO has submitted to DFID since 2008
- A review of the NEF reports on Value for Money and other relevant documents relating to this evaluation
- A review of background information relating to each of the two sample countries whose programmes were evaluated in depth: Nepal and Ethiopia (see below).

¹ Self-Assessment report 2009–10

² The evaluation focuses only on the most recent PPA period (1 April 2008 to present). Therefore, although reference is made to the whole PPA period, it concentrates on developments in VSO's strategies, programming, structure and context over this period.

Field visits to two sample countries: The TOR specified that the validity of results should be assessed through an illustrative sample of VSO's total programming in its performance framework. Therefore evaluation visits were conducted in the two countries that VSO selected for this purpose: Nepal (focusing on the HIV & AIDS programme) and Ethiopia (focusing on the education programme). For each country, the evaluators:

- interviewed relevant staff in the VSO country offices
- interviewed key staff from selected partner agencies in both country visits
- conducted focus group discussions with beneficiaries of some partners in both countries
- sent questionnaires to other agencies and donors working with shared partners in each country
- sent questionnaires to all volunteers working in relevant sectors.

Interviews in London: interviews were conducted with programme and policy staff in London:

- Interviews with Programme Development Advisers and Policy and Advocacy Advisers – both as orientation for the field trips and as a key component of the evaluation process
- Focus group discussions with relevant staff around how VSO has been able to work with, and benefit from, the PPA
- Interview with the Acting Head of Public Engagement at VSO in relation to Strategic Objective 4 (increased support from UK public for a UK development agenda).

SECTION 3: RESULTS

This section is informed by VSO's distinctive approach to development, which believes that by developing the capacity of government and civil society partners, the rights of poor and marginalised groups, especially women, will be realised. This experience can be used to build the support of the UK public for development. The evaluation also used VSO's understanding of impact and its role in contributing to improved quality of life for beneficiaries as a main point of reference (see Annex 5 VSO Impact Assessment Scoping Paper). The evaluation:

- Assessed the validity of the self-assessment reports in relation to capacity building of partners and the impact on beneficiaries through the samples described above
- Considered results on partner capacity and outcomes of VSO's efforts in advocacy for beneficiaries
- Considered the impact of the PPA on VSO's work

3.1 VSO programmes: PPA strategic objectives for each of the three programme areas are:

- **HIV & AIDS:** Improved capacity of partner organisations, including coalitions and networks of people living with HIV and AIDS, to advocate for and increase access to, quality prevention, treatment, care and support services to men and women, and girls and boys affected by HIV & AIDS in 19 countries. This primarily covers quality of services but also includes workplace policy development with partners.
- **Education:** Improved capacity of schools, teacher training colleges and professional development centres to deliver quality education for disadvantaged learners in 17 countries. This covers quality of education improved by VSO through more inclusive teaching methodologies, education management and community engagement.
- **Disability:** Disabled People's Organisations at national and local level increase their capacity to raise awareness of women and men with disabilities, on how to access their rights to education, health, livelihoods and participation in decision-making in 13 countries.

3.11 Partner capacity Areas of quality assessed under this heading were developed as a result of consultations with target groups. This makes them valid and useful measures of quality in relation to partner capacity.

HIV & AIDS programme in Nepal: In six out of the seven partner organisations interviewed in Nepal, the evaluators could confidently verify the information provided in the 2009-10 Self-Assessment Report. The seventh partner was in discussion with VSO Nepal about rethinking its strategy. In relation to progress against indicators, the evaluation found:

- *Prevention and care:* Continued support provided by volunteers and VSO Nepal led to increased confidence and improved planning skills for partners. As a result, they have been able to design and develop more innovative and effective projects, which complement their existing efforts.
- *Continuity of services:* VSO support in enabling partners to build organisational systems and structures resulted in numerous developments within partner organisations (for example, the development of more coherent links between and across their projects, thus improving both quality and relevance of their package of services)³.
- *Systems and structures:* Although all partners are explicit in the value they place on VSO OD support, they found it challenging to talk specifically about the changes that have taken place since 2008. They all felt the need to contextualise their capacity development in terms of the OD processes that were initiated at the beginning of the 2006 period when the formal process was set in motion. However, since 2008 they have been able to cite evidence of organisational capacity ranging from specific support in the development of advocacy, to the development of project proposals and strategic planning and financial management.

Education programme in Ethiopia: In all four of the partner organisations visited in Ethiopia (including the Ministry of Education) the evaluators could confidently verify much of the information provided in the 2009-10 Self-Assessment. Time constraints meant that not all findings could be verified, but based on the fact that those that were explored matched the report, the evaluators are confident that reporting is accurate. In relation to progress against indicators, the evaluation found:

- *Teacher attitudes, skills and behaviours:* This area of quality is the strongest of those assessed and confirms VSO's own assessment in its 2009–10 PAR, which was rated as 'excellent'. Particular examples included improved knowledge and skills of teachers in planning and active teaching and learning methodologies; significant support to both the development of materials and training for teachers in Class Zero (recently mandated by MOE); improved in-service CPD programmes; improved academic results from primary school students; increased interest in school studies for some students (boys, girls, and those with special needs); significant improvements in ICT resources, support and capacity.
- *Education management:* 'Some progress' was recorded in this area. The field visit offered examples of improved technical capacity of cluster supervisors; improved teacher participation in decision making (female teachers in particular; relatively increased number of female teachers assigned as instructors, unit leaders, vice principals and principals; improved opportunities for girls in schools and colleges to participate at many levels; greater awareness of special needs in grade 1–4; improved planning, decision making and leadership by head teachers; improved attendance and motivation of female teachers and students as a result of VSO small grants which supported the building of toilets, decorating and furnishing classrooms, supporting the development of libraries and the science curriculum).
- *Community engagement:* Although this a key area of intervention in relation to VSO's education programme, the field visit, supported by secondary research, suggested that there is the less focus on this area of intervention. Some progress was noted: improved participation of parents and communities in different school programmes through PTAs; strengthened relationship between schools and communities; increased PTAs and community support to schools. This area may need further investment of effort and resources.

³ For example, NGN supports IDUs through rehab, offers follow up day care, provided technical education and vocational training and support some graduates to find employment

³ Two partners specifically cited that they had achieved 90% and 98% of their OD plan that was developed in 2005/6

Disability (globally): Interviews in London confirmed the following progress against indicators in this programme area:

- *Disabled People Organisations increased their capacity to reach more disabled people, increased their awareness and access to their rights:* Good progress registered in this area. Success was reported in increasing the capacity of DPOs in being representative and inclusive of disabled people in rural areas and of disabled women; in good governance, leadership and transparency; and in services and benefit provision.
- *Co-ordinated Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) strategies that respond to the voice of disabled people, especially women, were established:* Good progress was recorded in strengthening 45 organisations delivering CBR services for disabled people in seven countries. Success was achieved where the strategy has been focusing on strengthening links amongst institutions, service providers and community groups.
- *Disabled people were included as volunteers and staff within VSO, engaging with partners and volunteers on mainstreaming disability, and improving the quality of programme work in all goals:* During 2009–2010, VSO placed a total of 14 volunteers with reported disabilities. Efforts and achievements in promoting and supporting the inclusion of disabled people in the services offered by partners across all goals increased dramatically. All 17 education programme area reviews reported either increased access to education for disabled children or plans to start or continue working towards this. Livelihood programme area reviews demonstrated an increased interest in promoting the inclusion of disabled people in the services offered by partners.

3.12 Impact of VSO strategies on partner organisations

Impact on partners working with HIV & AIDS in Nepal: three key outcomes for partner organisations to which VSO interventions have contributed were noted:

- *Improved capacity:* Specifically this includes tailoring services effectively; increased reach; partners providing better quality and more integrated services; greater inclusion of both women and marginalised people in service delivery, management and governance; stronger coalitions and networks; the development of rights-based approaches; the ability to run effective programmes/projects.
- *Improved confidence:* Six of the seven partners visited impressed the evaluators with their energy, commitment and confidence about the directions they had chosen to take. They were well-informed, focused and clear about areas where they needed to develop their skills. Considering the high percentage of MARPs involved in management roles, this is significant. This confidence enabled partners to source funds independently, to develop robust plans and to clearly articulate how VSO could support them in realising these plans.
- *Improved credibility:* The VSO OD approach was recognised and quoted by ministries within the government and by other agencies and NGOs. Significantly, the MOE, recognising that the current cascading model has failed, has applied for volunteers. Recently, the British Council, FHI and USAID also applied to VSO for volunteers to work with their local partners. Partners claimed that one of the key reasons that they were able to source funding from international donors related to the fact that donors recognise that CBOs who had benefited from VSO support had more robust plans, structures and systems⁴.

A key finding is that the Nepali government acknowledged the key role that NGOs played in the mitigation of HIV & AIDS. VSO partners were active contributors.

⁴ For example the National Association of People Living with HIV reported that partnering with VSO had been important in convincing DFID to fund them

Impact on partners working in education in Ethiopia: VSO is a small but significant player in the drive to achieve Ethiopia's MDG in education. Its key and most valued support is in providing skilled and motivated personnel at many levels within the education system alongside the very significant provision and administration of small grants. While VSO cannot take credit for all of the following impact (efforts by government, individual institutions and other agencies are also responsible) it was clear that where VSO had been successful it contributed to changes in capacity of some of those whom it directly influenced. At Ministry level this included the design and some delivery of quality programmes and curricula for teacher education. For instructors this included increased confidence and motivation to employ active learning methods; increased confidence to carry out and take responsibility for work; increased participation at all levels of decision making; improved communication and work relationships between the college management and the instructors themselves; improved skills in English and IT. For supervisors, this included increased confidence and motivation to support local teachers and the ability to support teachers to develop specific technical skills (e.g. in science when equipment was made available).

Impact on partners working with disability globally: Over the period of this evaluation, the most significant changes in partner capacity included being representative and inclusive of disabled people in rural areas and of disabled women; good governance, leadership and transparency; services and benefit provision (either as direct service provision or as referral for information); greater networking and working together of DPOs, resulting in a stronger and more active disability sector in some countries. The unquantifiable impact of individual and personal relationships between volunteers and those with whom they work should be noted. Key informants talked of 'transformation', 'role models', 'inspirations' and 'life-changing experiences' as a result of working alongside volunteers.

3.13 Contributions to change at beneficiary level

- **Through HIV & AIDS programme:** Through focus groups discussions and other interviews, the evaluators were able to confirm that partner capacity contributed to some changes in the lives of beneficiaries – most significantly through directly involving them in governance, management and operations, through results of advocacy and through providing more tailored and appropriate services. The impact on the LGBTI community on the change in law that recognises them (see Advocacy, below), will be significant socially, professionally and politically.
- **Through the education programme:** Although it takes time for the impact of efforts to improve access to quality (and the period 2008–10 is unrealistic in this respect), there are positive signs that teachers and other staff are delivering better quality educational services; and that a small percentage of children are benefiting. Pupils, who were lucky enough to benefit from improved teacher capacity and motivation, as well as physical resources, were clearly enjoying a very positive school experience. It should be noted however that, looking at the wider picture of quality in education, this is an important step but there remains a very long way to go.
- **Through the disability programme:** As stated in the section on numbers reached, there was a remarkable increase in scale and reach relating to women and men with disabilities. People interviewed (through FGDs) who joined a DPO after 2008 reported dramatic changes in their awareness of their rights and in their self-confidence. People reported being able to participate in their community and in some cases to be able to leave the house for the first time ever. New members reported changes in their attitude and behaviour, due to their increased self-confidence. Disabled people who joined district DPOs reported increased opportunities to access livelihood, health and education services.

3.14 Approaches to development

Key capacities: VSO's distinctive approach to development is through capacity building of partners. This is based on the belief that this method is the most sustainable and equitable way to realise the rights of poor and marginalised people. The evaluation confirmed that this is a sound approach.

Reaching target groups: Over the three programme areas, and in different ways, VSO can take credit for supporting partners that have made significant progress in involving target groups within their organisations. In some cases, target group members worked as staff, and in others, they were involved in the governance of the organisation. There is evidence that partners are actively involved in networks and alliances at district, region and/or national levels (especially those working in HIV & AIDS and disability). In relation to HIV & AIDS, some partners successfully built services for target groups into existing government structures and systems. This strategy supports institution strengthening and works to further combat issues of stigma and discrimination. Progress was also made in terms of mainstreaming HIV & AIDS into organisations and programmes. In the education programme, VSO efforts complemented government strategies to reach girls and children living in very remote areas.

Numbers of beneficiaries reached: Criteria for numbers reached for each of the three goals were defined by VSO programme staff and partners. On the whole, VSO felt that these numbers were accurate. It is beyond the scope of this evaluation to verify those numbers.

- **HIV & AIDS programme:** Globally (and in relation to PPA) VSO reported reaching 3,406,809 people through prevention, care and support services across 13 programmes. In Nepal, in most projects there was a significant increase in scale and reach⁵. Reasons given included the continuation of, or additional, financial support; continuous efforts to make its service more accessible to wider number of people; and technical support from volunteers in relation to organisational development and in securing additional funding. The Self-Assessment report suggested that figures given should be treated with caution as some data on intervention activities was mixed with numbers of people receiving the treatment. Equally, it is likely that other supporting donor agencies will be crediting these (possibly unreliable) figures to their support of individual CBOs.
- **Education programme:** Global reach was reported as 38,900 schools with a total of 14,604,139 children (7,374,984 boys and 7,229,155 girls) enrolled in schools in 17 programmes. In Ethiopia, all partners reported increases in scale and reach of their efforts. Government commitment was the key driver in the increase in numbers. MOE also invested significant efforts in encouraging girls' attendance at school. Whilst government efforts were credited with this rise, it is likely that various VSO interventions supported their retention – close working with gender offices result in improved education performance among girls and improved quality of service at university and college levels. It is worth noting that, in Ethiopia (as in other countries where VSO is operational), there are ongoing challenges in terms of the reliability of figures collected. To date, it is not possible to record drop-out rates. This indicates that the Education Management Information System (EMIS) needs to be further strengthened and improved.
- **Disability programme:** There was an increase in reached women and men with disabilities, **and due to the programme focus on DPO expansion, these figures are likely to be accurate.** In the six sample countries, the membership has increased from 36,811 disabled people in 2008 to 184,285 in 2010 (against a projected increase to 64,592). This was due to the increase in membership of DPOs, their increased capacity to count and manage their membership and an increase in the number of partners VSO supported.

3.2 Policy development and advocacy (based on field visits)

⁵ See relevant work stream reports

Advocacy efforts around HIV & AIDS with a focus on Nepal: The self-assessment reported 'good or excellent progress' against the relevant strategic objective⁶. All partners in Nepal reported development with their advocacy efforts both at district and national levels. Some examples of district/regional-level advocacy included membership of bodies such as the HIV/AIDS Alliance; work with police on police harassment issues; advocacy at district level which resulted in improved budget allocation for PHLA; and increasing facilities for PLHA in hospital. The most significant development was the change of law in Nepal to recognise the gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex community. This is the first such laws globally. The main thrust of the advocacy for this change came from one of VSO's key partners in Nepal.

Examples of national level advocacy included working in collaboration with a number of organisations to secure educational rights for PLWA children; a white paper on the rights of LGBTI was developed and submitted to the Constituent Assembly; successful advocacy with MOE Curriculum Department resulted in LGBT issues being included in Grades 8, 9 and 10 (supported by BDS); increased levels of government-allocated funds since 2008 for MSM HIV support; a key role in ensuring ARV treatment for PLWA in Nepal; a significant role in encouraging government to provide social security for children of WLWA and older people; lobbying government and international donors to allocate more funds for PLWA and an active role in influencing and deciding how funds should be distributed. In relation to VSO's advocacy success scale (see Annex), two of the above initiatives were scored at Stage 2 on the scale; one on Stage 4 and one on Stage 5.

Advocacy efforts around education with a focus on Ethiopia: The 2010 Self-Assessment reported 'excellent progress' against the relevant strategic objective⁷. The political environment was challenging in Ethiopia⁸, and VSO responded to this by taking a softer approach of influencing from the inside, and with impressive results. VSO was able to contribute to the establishment of the National Framework for Continuous Professional Development of Teachers, which resulted in 225,319 teachers having better CPD opportunities. In May 2008, VSO initiated an education development group comprising VSO volunteers, school management and school leaders. Good practices on CPD at school and regional level were thus shared with the Ministry of Education, leading to the construction of a new vision of CPD based on international good practice.

VSO was instrumental in involving Ethiopia (and 13 other countries) in the 1GOAL: Education for All campaign – resulting in exclusive media coverage of VSO's contribution to EFA goals and its role in building civil societies' capacity to hold national government accountable. Other achievements included the development and presentation of a paper on tackling gender inequality in education through partnership at the UNGEI conference in Dakar. The paper included case studies from VSO's education programmes in Ghana and Ethiopia.

3.3 Impact of PPA on overall health of the organisation since 2008

- **Developed more robust systems for M&E and impact assessment:** The exercise of developing **baselines** and reporting against them was considered an enriching experience by stakeholders at all levels. In particular, respondents cited that being forced to **understand and record scale and**

⁶ The relevant strategic objective states: "24 policy initiatives (seven national, 17 local) in four sample countries (Bangladesh, Nepal, Malawi, Zambia) will make significant progress⁶ on their 2008 baseline position by March 2011. These are policy initiatives that aim to realise women and men's rights with regard to prevention, treatment, care and support services".

⁷ "Nine policy initiatives (four national, five local) in six sample countries (Ghana, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Namibia, Pakistan, Thailand) will make significant progress on their 2008 baseline position by March 2011. These are policy initiatives that aim to realise girls' and boys' rights to education".

⁸ In January 2009 Ethiopia's parliament passed a law to regulate charities (despite strong criticism from opposition politicians, international human rights groups and national civil society organisations). This proclamation for the Registration and Regulation of Charities and Societies effectively bans INGOs and CSOs from conducting advocacy

reach, allowed the organisation to quantify scale. Although the process is not yet perfect (see section on Learning), this was an important development in terms of learning and accountability. By **involving partners and beneficiaries in identifying areas of quality** for different programme areas, VSO was able to focus on the active participation of target groups in planning, designing and reporting on the progress of programmes and became more confident to assess progress in this area. Partners understood the processes more clearly as a result, and were better able to report on progress.

The need to report on impact forced VSO to develop its understanding of in this area and to develop new methodologies to measure and illustrate change at different levels. As part of this process, VSO developed an organisational **Theory of Change** and four **Dimensions of Change**. In relation to advocacy, VSO developed an **Advocacy Success scale**, which provides a common framework upon which all advocacy efforts can be measured. In general, these developments have driven up the quality of other VSO reporting processes.

- **Used unrestricted funds effectively:** VSO had been able to use unrestricted funding to develop innovative programmes that were able to respond more directly to the expressed needs of target groups (National Volunteering, education programme in Nepal, working in politically sensitive areas such as Burmese refugees in Thailand). The flexibility of a strategic grant as also enabled VSO to listen to partners, and develop the 'Path to partnership. This is a framework that guides all work with partners. Importantly, it has enabled VSO to discuss with partners what impact they are seeking in their communities and how to work with them to develop their capacity to achieve these changes.
- **Focused more explicitly on poor, marginalised and excluded people:** As part of the M&E process, the decision to use 'inclusion' as a proxy indicator and then to develop and facilitate workshops to assess levels of inclusion brought this area of VSO's work to the forefront of its operations.

SECTION 4: VALUE FOR MONEY

This section is divided according to the Terms of Reference into **cost-effectiveness** and **efficiency**.

4.1 Cost-effectiveness: The overall finding of this evaluation was that VSO has been effective in realising PPA development outcomes, particularly in relation to the positive changes in partner organisations. Within this context, this section focuses on the relation between **costs** and **development outcomes** (based on findings of the July 2010 New Economics Foundation evaluation), and the **cost-effectiveness of volunteering** as a development intervention.

4.1.1 Relationship between costs and outcomes: The data collected showed that VSO was unable to fully demonstrate Value for Money through analysis of this relationship. However VSO should be congratulated on their stakeholder engagement and inclusion of beneficiary voices in decision-making. The latter is essential for making sure beneficiaries receive Value for Money. It is clear that VSO has robustly identified priority areas of service quality and focused its resources on achieving change in these areas. In order to build on this good work and to measure effectiveness, two main recommendations were made:

1. The introduction of an outcomes-based measurement system for partners and beneficiaries
2. The introduction of an input-cost model that could evaluate costs at a goal, country and partner level. This would enable strategic decision-making and drive cost-effectiveness.

VSO is in a strong position to implement a Value for Money framework of this nature due to its distinctive model of development. VSO's long-term relationship with partners means that it is uniquely positioned to help partners embed outcomes-based M&E systems.

Furthermore, VSO's volunteers represent a resource that could extend beyond capacity-building partners to administering a framework themselves. This framework should be based on advanced cost-benefit analysis (eg, social return on investment methodology) that produces financial approximations to capture outcomes, and which shows the scale of change by calculating the relative worth of outcomes to beneficiaries. In addition, this financial approximation places impact in a currency common to investment and aids decision-making with respect to how to achieve Value for Money. Adopting a Value for Money framework puts VSO in a strong position to adapt to allocate their resources effectively and to adapt to the fast changing external environment.

4.1.2 Cost-effectiveness of volunteering as a VSO development intervention: Although no systematic benchmarking was undertaken, it was concluded that placing long-term international volunteers as supporters and facilitators of development is a cost-effective development intervention. It is effective because although many volunteers worked in challenging environments (e.g. in very poor communities, with heavy bureaucracy, lacking colleagues with whom they can work, very limited resources and access to funding, language constraints, lacking a clear role or a plan of work), planned outcomes were mostly achieved. Most volunteers worked hard and creatively to find ways to productively engage partners. Planned outcomes could be verified in terms of increased partner capacity and changes at beneficiary level. In both Nepal and Ethiopia, it was clear that having a volunteer based with a partner organisation gave the partner more credibility. Partners were explicit that the combination of skills and long-term support volunteers provide were not otherwise available to them.

Volunteers are a **cost-effective** intervention because unlike almost any other form of development, the majority of partners contributed to the costs of their volunteers, and were often involved in their selection – they effectively bought the volunteer's services. Although the costs of recruiting, training and supporting a long-term volunteer are around £661 per month, this compares favourably with the average costs of a consultant at £10,000 per month (based on £500 per day) and with the average cost of an international aid worker, whose salary would be £2,500 per month (conservatively based on £30,000pa). For this sum (with a local wage often provided by the partner organisation), partners had access to long-term technical expertise, training, mentoring and other support as required.

4.2 Efficiency: These findings are based on the September 2010 New Economics Foundation investigation into whether VSO's procurement practices are likely to maximise value for its expenditure, and whether it follows practices likely to minimise the risk of fiduciary malpractice. The evaluation was positive on both counts and concluded that VSO should emphasise the following to external stakeholders:

- It has an overall strategic approach to the management of its business that allows it to assess continuously where its performance is optimal or otherwise
- A managerial approach that effectively identifies strategic concerns and future developmental needs
- A capacity to respond as quickly and as effectively as possible to major issues of concern that affects its ability to deliver Value for Money
- That it has commissioned this study as reflection of its recognition that there may be issues to address.

However, there is scope for improving the use and compliance with the agreed procurement policy. It would help if a standardised procurement process protocol and a supporting electronic documentation system could be established.

In order to build on good practice, it is recommended that VSO carries out a review to check its compliance with procurement policy and practice guidance, and that procurement staff have the skills required for competitive tendering. VSO should assess whether only staff with these professional skills should carry out all procurement. VSO should also consider reviewing the delegation of appropriate purchasing and internal audit responsibilities to regional directors. There is a need for VSO to take a more systematic approach to documentation and archiving of procurement processes, with a minimum acceptable period for retaining original documents.

Risks to VSO capacity that should be considered: These include the continuity of pro bono support and changes in key staff. For the former, VSO should consult with pro bono stakeholders and peer organisations to assess the risk of pro bono capacity for key tasks diminishing in the current economic climate, and make contingency plans where appropriate. For the latter, VSO should develop an appropriate means of reducing the potential impact of the loss of key financial staff (eg, through extended notice periods). In general, VSO should establish a means of being able to monitor and systematically assess the risk and prospects of turnover within its financial and internal audit staffing capacities.

SECTION 5: BUILDING SUPPORT FOR DEVELOPMENT

The relevant strategic objective states: 'To clearly demonstrate increased development awareness that contributes towards greater active global citizenship in the following groups: Educators and key staff from all levels of the UK education sector; people in the UK from Diaspora and refugee communities, adult and youth community learning groups, public sector and other voluntary sector organisations.'

5.1 Introduction: Development awareness is part of the VSO portfolio, and part of the volunteer journey. However, until 2008, efforts to report on this work in the UK had been limited. The development of this strategic objective in 2008 provided the organisation with an opportunity to grow its understanding of what development awareness involved, to find more rigorous ways to track progress against each of the four set indicators and to assess the impact of increased development awareness in relation to global active citizenship. In short, it enabled VSO to sharpen its focus on this area. It also provided VSO and DFID an opportunity to work together on a shared area of interest.

In response to the development climate and DFID requirements in 2008, the main driver for this objective was to increase scale and reach – firstly, to enable more people (within the education sector and the general public) to hear development messages and, secondly, to take action to raise development awareness.

5.2 Results: With no existing benchmarking, milestones and targets to determine scale and reach were largely estimates. However, for each year and for each indicator, VSO performed surprisingly well against these targets. For example, in the 2010 Self-Assessment, the target for Indicator 4.2 (people learn more about development awareness through projects/programmes) was 2,500 but the figure achieved was 13,200. Cumulatively, in the period 2008–2010, VSO reached a target of 256,950 against a three-year target (2008–11) of 47,000. These figures demonstrate that development messages were received by a much broader audience than anticipated.

Based on this evidence, VSO has been able to explore different ways in which it can work through different target groups to promote development awareness to previously unreachable groups. In 2009 and 2010, innovative and successful areas of work were developed with these new target groups (for example, work with Diaspora groups within the UK, political volunteers, national volunteers volunteering in their own countries, etc).

In August 2010, Irish Senator Dominic Hannigan spent two weeks as an adviser with the Blue Diamond Society (BDS) advocating for the rights of Nepal's LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersexual) community; and advised on equality and inclusion for gay and transgender people in Nepal. Because Senator Hannigan sits on the Overseas Committee in Ireland, he will work to represent Nepal's interests on this committee

5.3 Other achievements

Bedding the concept of development awareness into the volunteering journey. Although strong in previous years, this new conceptual understanding and its communication have significantly raised the profile and strategic importance of development awareness within the organisation as a whole (e.g. the recently developed VSO Theory of Change presents development awareness as one of its key areas of influence).

Developing more rigorous methodologies for monitoring and evaluating progress and understanding impact of building support for development: As with other areas, the PPA proved to be the driver for the establishment of baselines, the development of reporting and self-reporting processes and procedures, and other monitoring studies (particularly the longitudinal study written by IOC in July 2010⁹). This was an important step, which enabled VSO to become more accountable for its progress against indicators; and to learn more about the process of raising development awareness and to what extent this awareness can/or does translate into global citizenship.

SECTION 6: LESSONS LEARNED

This section highlights lessons learned throughout the three-year PPA period. For the most part, these lessons have been taken on board by relevant sections of the organisation and are being built into planning. Issues to address from these lessons appear in Section 7.

6.1 VSO programmes

6.11 Partner capacity: VSO works with a very wide range of partners across different sectors (eg, the Ministry of Education in Ethiopia to a small CBO run by ex-drug users in Nepal). Different approaches to partner capacity development reflected this diversity. Much learning in this area is sector specific (and is provided in Annex 6). Overall, VSO played a small but significant role in building capacity across its chosen programme areas. VSO values its relationships with partners at all levels. Its organisational development and capacity-building strategies respond to partners' changing needs and contribute to improved capacity, confidence, credibility and motivation of partners. For example, departments and institutions within the education sector, along with CBOs, have become stronger and more skilled. VSO's relationships and capacity-building role with partners was able to flex and respond according to its partners' changing needs. There is evidence of growing collaboration and networking across and between sectors nationally. Advocacy plays an important role in this. There is further potential for linking efforts at grass roots to national and international advocacy efforts.

6.12 Impact of VSO strategies: VSO works through partners and other allies to produce change at beneficiary level. However, changes at this level can only be indirectly linked to VSO's interventions. Changes at this level have been appropriately illustrated in the self-assessment reports.

⁹ *Returned Volunteers and Engagement with Development, Final Report for VSO Longitudinal study* Institute of Education, University of London, July 2010

Reaching target groups: VSO programme staff and partners have defined results criteria in the context of each of the three goals and progress has been good year on year. VSO needs to continue to work on refining and building capacity to ensure that figures are accurate.

Gender and diversity: Across all sectors, and often related to VSO efforts to promote gender and inclusion, more women, girls and other marginalised groups were able to access relevant services. Efforts in disability and HIV & AIDS led to greater inclusion of women and marginalised groups in management and governance of CBOs. Efforts in these areas need to continue in order to increase reach and ensure greater involvement of these groups in their own development; and to continue to improve the quality and relevance of services. However, there is a need to make gender and inclusion work more explicit, and with a clear rationale that programme staff could use to take their work to a new level.

6.13 Approaches to development

Long-term volunteers and how to enable them to be most effective: Using volunteers as supporters and facilitators of development was an effective and cost-effective strategy in terms of achieving stated outcomes, and contributing to planned changes. Further, this strategy produced outcomes in a wide variety of unexpected and unintended ways. VSO Ethiopia (as a sample) estimated that there is a 70% success rate with volunteer placements. Volunteer placements were most successful when:

- There were clearly defined and jointly agreed roles and responsibilities between the partner and the volunteer
- The partner understood and valued the role of the volunteer
- Volunteers were able to understand and work within the cultural and professional environment in which they were placed; they had the appropriate skills and were placed at the 'right level'; they were responsive to the changing needs of the partners and proactive in identifying new areas of support when required
- There was good communication, support and leadership from programme managers and the Programme Office
- Knowledge, skills sharing and support was available from other volunteers
- Volunteers could access small grants, or other sources of funding to support capacity building efforts
- Where some, or all, of these elements were partially or not in place, the success of the placement was compromised
- Some partners and volunteers struggled with ownership: some smaller CBOs reported that the VSO capacity-building efforts were seen as a separate add-on to the main focus of their work; some VSO National Offices struggled to fully integrate their goals with those of stronger partners (such as Ministries of Education); some volunteers reported a lack of clarity about whose agenda they were really serving.

Short-term volunteers: Notable successes came through MPs as Political Volunteers (PolVols), notably Senator Dominic Hannigan's visit to Nepal. In the disability sector, short-term placements were particularly appropriate when a volunteer was required to fulfil very specific tasks (eg, support for writing funding proposals or training in advocacy). In other programmes, some short-term volunteers failed to contribute effectively and may have had negative effects. Sound research and clearly identified and specific needs should be a pre-requisite for short-term volunteer placements.

National Volunteering: Plans on NV were at an early stage in both the programmes the evaluators visited. It was clear in Nepal and Ethiopia that community engagement was important for the long-term success of both the HIV and education sectors. NV provided a way to increase the reach and scale of programmes and created a means for local people, many from VSO target groups, to

become involved in their own and their communities' development. This strategy needs to be built coherently into future programme plans.

- **Small grants:** One of the key lessons for this evaluation is that capacity building efforts were compromised in situations where resources are very limited. Volunteers and/or partners need to be able to access small pockets of funding in order to support effective capacity building efforts
- **Other strategies:** Strategies such as training, workshops and knowledge brokering opportunities between relevant organisations were all valued by partners, but the provision of long-term support to nascent CBOs in a resource-poor environment was VSO's most valued strategy.
- **Role of the National Office and Programme Managers:** National Offices were working to well-conceived country strategic plans; they employed realistic, effective and – mostly – accurate methods to track progress and to report on impact. They were applying learning from evaluations to the development of future strategies.
 - National offices have forged independent relationships with other national and international players in-country. This presence at national levels lends credibility to advocacy, to partners and to volunteers' work with partners. This area has potential for further growth.
 - The National Office has a key role to play in selecting and supporting partners; in negotiating and managing roles and relationships between partners, the volunteer and the National Office themselves; and ensuring that realistic exit strategies are in place and communicated effectively.
 - Programme managers have been instrumental in developing and building strong relationships with partners and supporting volunteers in their placements (in numerous ways including guidance, support and advice around accessing funds); and they were effectively juggling these complex relationships in up to 26 placements per Programme Manager. Evaluators were impressed by the professionalism and dedication of all Programme Managers.

6.2: Policy development and advocacy: The PPA performance framework helped VSO articulate how its advocacy initiatives were instrumental to its programme aims. Most programmes had advocacy as a key tool or objective within their programme area plan. Advocacy is now recognised as a core part of VSO's work, which is essential for addressing the structural foundations of poverty and inequality. The advocacy success scale provides a clear indication of progress towards the implementation of policy change, but to date, VSO has not developed methods for understanding how efforts in advocacy contribute to changes at beneficiary level.

6.3 Impact of PPA on overall health of the organisation: Partnering with VSO through the PPA has enabled DFID to make a substantial contribution to the development of international volunteering, with VSO often cited as a global benchmark for other INGOs working through volunteers. Funding from DFID has been instrumental in VSO's organisational development. The unrestricted nature of the PPA has enabled VSO to be flexible in the way it supports its partners – they reported that this was substantially different from the tied financial support they received from other international donors and INGOs and, as a result, they were able to manage their other funded projects effectively. The PPA reporting process has brought improved systems and rigour to VSO's planning, M&E and impact assessment. For future reporting processes, the following lessons will be relevant:

- In an attempt to understand progress, VSO tried to collect too much information: too many people were involved and there were too many layers. The job of aggregation should have been set at higher level, with PDAs rather than in-country. There is a recognised need to slim down and rationalise the process; to make it more user-friendly and, crucially, to ensure that one set of processes can be used to report to different donors
- VSO should continue to work on developing ways to understand progress in capacity building and to understand outcomes at beneficiary levels. Respondents reflect that FGDs are very time-

consuming. There is a need to find other tools and processes for understanding change at this level

- VSO should continue to develop and refine understanding and reporting on scale and reach so that numbers are useful and duplication of numbers with other agencies can be avoided.
- Although the process of setting the baseline was invaluable, and resulted in strengthening programmes (in terms of focus and priority setting) it came too late in the PPA process, making it hard to assess outcomes within such a short time frame. In future, VSO would like to continue to set baselines and to improve on the timing and process
- VSO focused on a select number of countries upon which to report progress for the PPA, and within that, a select number of key partners to work with for tracking progress and outcomes. Consequently, these country programmes and partners are ahead of others in terms of their planning and reporting processes

6.4 Value for Money: VSO development strategies are clearly effective. Further research is needed to explore which of VSO's unique strategies are the most cost-effective way of achieving these results. VSO has made strenuous efforts to understand its outcomes and improve reporting, although further work is required to link this assessment to cost-effectiveness. VSO is taking consideration of VfM seriously and is investing in developing its understanding and application of the VfM approach, which is commendable. However, the organisation should also be confident in its approach to capacity building as a means of achieving change at beneficiary level. It should not be over-influenced by the current trend to try to assign a monetary value to all achievements. This is particularly important in an organisation such as VSO whose impact extends well beyond programmatic interventions (e.g. implementation of pro-poor policies, continued growth of a partner organisation, impact of Returned Volunteers, etc).

There is also scope for improving the use and compliance with the agreed procurement policy.

6.5 Building Support for Development: This area of work has developed significantly within the organisation and, for the first time, is bedded coherently into organisation-wide thinking. Increasing the breadth of engagement has enabled VSO to work in new and innovative ways with previously unreachable target groups. Some new ways of working have been remarkably successful and represent excellent Value for Money. The process of clarifying the framework of engagement for volunteers enabled the organisation to refine the roles that volunteers can play in facilitating greater development awareness. However, VSO studies showed that RVs are still more committed to applying their field experience to local expertise or activism, than they are in supporting higher-level advocacy and campaigning.

Progress has been made in terms of developing reporting mechanisms for this area of work, but one challenge is to establish to what extent and what percentage of these people will subsequently engage with development. RV self-reporting processes are not rigorous and possibly underestimate achievement. In addition, much of the reporting through the PPA self-assessment processes is limited to numbers and activities.

SECTION 7: ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

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This section summarises issues that could be addressed by VSO in order to ensure that this sound programme builds on both its strengths and the lessons learned from this PPA evaluation.

7.1 VSO programmes

Partner capacity

- **Support partners to become financially self-sustaining:** Partners across thematic areas and countries talk of their dependence on donors and the vulnerability this creates. VSO should work with partners on developing resource mobilisation strategies (eg, income generation, targeting private and public funds, etc).
- **Build on and encourage collaboration:** Map out and build stronger collaborative relationships with other development actors at all levels, so that VSO's capacity building strategy is more coherently linked to other development efforts, especially the provision of funding.
- **Support the harmonisation of VSO strategic plans and reporting processes with donor grants and their reporting demands:** Significant efforts have been made in this area, and yet there are still conflicting demands for information that national offices and partners are required to produce. In relation to this, consider ways in which reporting processes can be streamlined for future grant reports
- **Find ways of sourcing funds to support capacity building:** This is a key area. Increased access to small pockets of funding alongside professional support can make a significant difference to the success of capacity building efforts, and thus to development outcomes. This is especially relevant in resource-poor environments.

Impact of VSO volunteering activities

- **Find ways to address the chronic need for resources and livelihood security in many areas where VSO is operational:** The evaluation found that in many areas, the need for livelihood and/or resources limited the potential of the capacity building support that VSO delivers.
- **Continue to focus on gender and inclusion in programmes:** There is evidence to support the fact that greater numbers of women, girls and marginalised people are accessing partners' services as a result of VSO's focus through the PPA, and that representatives of these groups are included in programme management and governance. However, there is no gender policy and staff would benefit from clear guidelines, training and support in this area. VSO is encouraged to build on current successes, and to focus on factors that enable women and girls the time and opportunity to benefit from their increased access to services

Approaches to development

- **Continue to build and develop the capacity and role of national offices:** National offices have a critical role to play in developing a strong national presence, in providing leadership on all strategies and process; and in brokering successful and sustainable partnerships.
- **Continue to explore ways and build capacity to assess numbers reached as a result of VSO interventions:** VSO's efforts to understand scale and reach are commendable and have supported learning at all levels. It will be worth investing in more resources to develop more robust methodologies to capture this data.
- **Develop a more holistic impact assessment framework for VSO:** As a result of its strategic review, VSO has developed an organisational Theory of Change and a coherent impact assessment framework. It can now consider building on these developments by:
 - Encouraging partners to identify which dimensions of change they will be working to and supporting them to report on outcomes against these dimensions
 - Building partner capacity to understand and develop methodologies for assessing the outcomes of their interventions. Involve volunteers more explicitly in these processes
 - Commission a retrospective impact study to better understand VSO's contribution to change and development over the last ten years. This would be particularly pertinent for education
- **Become a stronger learning organisation:** VSO has a strong commitment to internally review its programmes locally through annual Programme Area Reviews. This enables Programme

Managers and Country Directors a regular opportunity to revise their plans according to learning and changes to the local context. The PPA Performance Framework has supported VSO in the development of a more systematic approach to evaluating outcomes across their programmes. The issue for the organisation now is to build this learning into decision-making processes at regional and corporate management levels.

- **Change VSO's name to reflect its more professional approach to development:** With the advent of National Volunteers into the VSO family, the term 'volunteer' has been expanded to cover a huge range of capacity, commitment and skills sets. In addition, in many contexts, 'volunteer' status is considered inferior to that of an employee. They have less authority, do not fit easily into any existing management structure and have charitable connotations. It might therefore be timely to consider a name change for the organisation and which distinguishes the more professional support that VSO provides internationally from the more local and voluntary support that it encourages in-country. Initial thoughts include:
 - PSO: Professional Service Overseas, where volunteers are 'Development Facilitators'
 - PDO: Professional Development Overseas, where they are 'Development Professionals'

7.2 Policy and Advocacy

- **Build capacity and presence around advocacy and influencing:** As a result of the PPA, advocacy is now recognised as a core part of VSO's work. VSO should continue to build on this area by building its influencing capacity and presence at national, regional and international levels.
- **Develop greater understanding of the impact of advocacy at community level:** The Advocacy Success Scale has been crucial in developing strategy and direction. Some clear signs of impact at community level have been noted, but VSO can build on this by further investing in ways to understand the impact of their advocacy efforts at community level.

7.3 Value for Money

- **Continue to engage in debates around what constitutes Value for Money in the development sector and how to report on it.** The shift to attempt to understand and report on cost-effectiveness and Value for Money is commendable. However, serious consideration needs to be given to the appropriateness of attaching monetary value to efforts in social transformation. Other ways of reporting Value for Money may well be more useful and appropriate.

7.4 Building Support for Development

- **Work to understand outcomes in this area:** Results relating to this area are limited to impressive numbers of those reached and reporting on activities. Efforts should now be made to find effective ways of capturing change in relation to this area.
- VSO might consider developing a dedicated theory of change for building support for development; and possibly the development of 'development activism success scales' along the lines of VSO's advocacy success scale.
- Continue to find ways of harnessing development awareness to active campaigning and public engagement, as this link appears weak.

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR DFID PPA FINAL EVALUATION

Background

Partnership Programme Arrangements (PPAs) were introduced by DFID in 2000 as direct replacements for the Block Grant and Volunteer Grants. These new models of CSO support allowed DFID to enter high level strategic partnerships with some of the most trusted and respected civil society organisations (CSOs) with whom DFID shared common goals and objectives.

PPAs provided the holders with longer term, unrestricted strategic funding in support of mutually agreed outcomes, enabling them to undertake those potentially higher yielding areas of their work which were innovative and higher risk but were, as a result, often under-funded.

However, the unrestricted nature of the PPA funding meant that, although high-level outcomes were agreed between the two parties, the PPA holder was not required to track DFID funds through to output and outcome level.

However, over the past couple of years DFID has, following National Audit Office recommendations, undertaken a comprehensive reform of the PPA process. One of the main outcomes of this process has been the introduction of more rigorous performance frameworks for all PPAs.

VSO first received DFID PPA support in 2000 and the current Programme Partnership Arrangement (PPA) with DFID is due to end on 31 March 2011.

The agreed purpose of this current PPA is to develop the capacity of government and civil society partners to realise the rights of poor and marginalised groups, especially women. And using this experience, to build the support of the UK public for development.

Purpose, and scope

As part of the PPA funding arrangement with DFID, it was agreed that all PPA holders would, in the last year of funding, arrange for an independent external evaluation of the PPA for the period 2008–11. This evaluation will use the most recent version of the VSO PPA performance framework.

The purpose of this evaluation is to re-confirm the common ethos and vision in recognised priority areas which exist between VSO and DFID and which led to the formulation of the current PPA.

The objective of the evaluation is to evaluate how far VSO has gone towards achieving the mutually agreed outcomes as stated in the PPA performance framework. The evaluation will also derive lessons that will enable VSO to inform its future strategies, programmes, approaches and set-up.

The target audience and main users of the findings of the evaluation will be VSO and the Civil Society Team at DFID. However, VSO partners and other stakeholders may also benefit from the findings (this could include but is not limited to southern partners of VSO, other donors, other parts of DFID, fellow PPA holders).

In terms of scope, the evaluation will focus only on the most recent PPA period (i.e. 1 April 2008 to present). Therefore it should cover developments in VSO's strategies, programming, structure and context over this time frame.

Methodology

Using the most recent agreed version of the VSO PPA performance framework and the agreed PPA baseline (both attached), the evaluators will:

- design and chair series of meetings/interviews with VSO staff to review and assess the range of objectives and indicators that were selected for sampling from the PPA and an evaluation of their contribution to the achievement of the agreed outcomes of the PPA.
- undertake a review of monitoring reports (Programme Area Reviews, Impact Assessment reports by sample country) , received by VSO from the partners and/or field offices
- review a range of evaluations of VSO supported initiatives in VSO sample themes (HIV & AIDS, Education, Disability)
- undertake interviews/survey of a range of stakeholders from VSOs partners, DFID policy teams and country offices, other donors, etc
- interviews/survey with a selection of key partners by a range of means including tele/videoconference interviews and meetings with and visits to the Education programme in Nepal and the HIV & AIDS programme in Ethiopia. Partners outside the illustrative sample will be prioritised so that the evaluator can establish whether findings within the sample are similar to those outside the sample.
- review the annual PPA Self-Assessment reports which VSO has submitted to DFID since 2008.

Value for Money will be assessed by a different set of evaluators using the desk-based/interview-based methods above but not visiting programmes. They will support the lead evaluator.

Skills and qualifications

The evaluator will be expected to have:

- A strong understanding and experience of evaluation methodology
- A comprehensive background in working with civil society organisations in the field of international development, development education, and in the case of Value for Money, skills in economic analysis

Outputs

The lead evaluator will be expected to produce a report of no more than **20 pages of A4**, in Plain English, and integrating Value for Money findings. This report will be written in a format that is easily accessible to all stakeholders.

This report will follow the following format:

1. Summary section (approx 2 pages). This summary will focus on the main findings and will specifically state how far the evaluator feels VSO has gone towards achieving the mutually agreed outcomes as stated in the PPA performance framework.
2. An Introductory section (approx 2 pages) which should include the methodology used in undertaking the evaluation.
3. A section on Results (approx 6 pages) – this section should include:

(i) results, including partner capacity changes and impact, of VSO volunteering activities ‘on peoples’ lives’ , including any specific impacts on gender power relations., The validity of results will be assessed in themes and programmes agreed as an illustrative sample of VSO’s total programming in VSO’s Performance Framework. These are as follows:

HIV & AIDS

Improved capacity of partner organisations, including coalitions and networks of people living with HIV and AIDS, to advocate for and increase access to, quality prevention, treatment, care and support services to men and women, and girls and boys affected by HIV and AIDS in 19 countries. This covers quality of services primarily. It also includes work place policy development with partners.

EDUCATION

Improved capacity of schools, teacher training colleges and professional development centres to deliver quality education for disadvantaged learners in 17 countries. This covers quality of education improved by VSO through more inclusive teaching methodologies, education management and community engagement.

DISABILITY

Disabled People's Organisations at national and local level increase their capacity to raise awareness of women and men with disabilities, on how to access to their rights to education, health, livelihoods and participation in decision-making in 13 countries

(ii) results, including partner capacity changes and impact, of **VSO** volunteering on relevant policy issues in

- programme sample for **HIV & AIDS** (24 policy initiatives that aim to realise women and men's rights with regard to prevention, treatment, care and support services) and
- programme sample for **Education** (nine policy initiatives that aim to realise girls' and boys' right to education).

(iii) the impact of the PPA on VSO's organisational development as well as the overall health of **VSO** monitoring and evaluation systems.

4. A section covering Value for Money (approx 3 pages). In this section the evaluator will provide specific evidence to show whether or not **VSO** is able to show Value for Money for DFID's PPA inputs. This should include:
 - a statement of how well VSO procurement practices are designed and operating to prevent fraudulent exploitation of grants/funds disbursed.
 - a statement on the data collected in 2008 and 2010 reporting the extent to which VSO can demonstrate impact on people's lives
 - Recommendations on both aspects of the VfM assessment
5. A section covering Lesson Learning (approx 3 pages). This section will highlight lessons learned throughout the three-year PPA period and how/whether these have been taken up across the VSO.
6. A section covering Building Support for Development (approx 2 pages) showing what progress CSO has been made against the objective and indicators in the VSO Performance Framework, with a focus on scale as this was lead outcome required in 2008-2011.
7. "To clearly demonstrate increased development awareness that contributes towards greater active global citizenship in the following groups: Educators and key staff from all levels of the UK education sector; people in the UK from Diaspora and Refugee communities, adult and youth community learning groups, public sector and other voluntary sector organisations."
8. A section on Issues to be addressed (approx 2 pages). This section will highlight any specific issues, which arose during the evaluation, which the evaluator feels need to be addressed, by VSO or DFID.

In submitting the final report we would ask that you include annexes, which contain:

- details of the final agreed TORs
- a list of people and organisations interviewed
- a list of documentation reviewed
- a timeline of the evaluation process

Timetable

The successful bidder will be expected to produce an initial draft report for discussion with VSO by no later than 31 October 2010.

The lead evaluator bidder will be expected to produce a final report, agreed with VSO, for submission to DFID. VSO will submit this finalised evaluation report to DFID, together with a four-page management response, by no later than 30 November 2010.

ANNEX 2: RECORD OF PEOPLE INTERVIEWED FOR THE EVALUATION

1. In Nepal

Staff

Arlene Mahinay, Country Director
Khadaga Pandey, Programme Support Manager
Jeevan Shrestha, National Volunteering Officer
Shushila Subba, Volunteer and Programme Support Coordinator
Rita Shrestha, Programme Manager (Participation, Governance & Disability Programme)
Juliana Yonzon, Programme Development Office (Participation, Governance & Disability Programme)
Raj Kumar Gandharba, Programme Manager (Education Programme)
Rima Manandhar, Programme Development Officer (Education Programme)
Pemudoma, Programme Development Officer (HIV & AIDS Programme)
Smriti Bhattarai, Programme Manager (HIV & AIDS Programme)

VSO volunteers

Jimmy Okot (VSON Volunteer - Programme Development Advisor)
Peter Lumoro (VSON volunteer - Programme Development Advisor)
Pragya Mishra (VSON Volunteer - Programme Development Advisor)

Partners

Prerana

Bikash Pyakurel (Programme Coordinator)
Ishwor Shakya (Care & Support Center Incharge)
Binod Gurung (Board Member, General Secretary)
Asha Chhetri (President)
Chandra Shrestha (Counsellor, Drop In Center, IDU Programme)
Bijay Chhetri (Admin & Finance Assistant)
Ramesh Pandey (Admin & Finance Officer)
Urmila Rawal (Counsellor - Female Prison Programme)
Jimmy Okot (VSON Volunteer - Programme Development Advisor)

Naulo Ghumti

Ram P. Gyawali (Executive Director)
Padam Pahari (Board Member- General Secretary)
Amit Dhungel (Programme Coordinator)
Sushil Gautam (Admin Finance Officer)
Narayan Paudel (Admin Finance Manager)
Peter Lumoro (VSON volunteer - Programme Development Advisor)

Community Support Group

Dilip Gurung (Executive Director)
Lal Gurung (Programme Manager)
Maya Gurung (Gender Programme Coordinator)
Raj Kumar Gurung (Life-Skill-Based Programme Coordinator)
Pragya Mishra (VSON Volunteer - Programme Development Advisor)

Blue Diamond Society

Manisha Dhakal (President, Federation of Gender & Sexual Minorities)
Salina Tamang (Programme Manager, HIV & AIDS Programme)

Pradip Shrestha (Human Rights Programme Coordinator)

Bidhyarthi Jagaran Manch (BIJAM)

Mahesh Aryal (President)

General Welfare Pratishan (GWP)

Mahesh Dev Bhattarai (Executive Director)

National Association of People Living with HIV & AIDS (NAP+N)

Basanta Chhetri (Board Member - General Secretary)

2. In Ethiopia

Staff

Wubeshet Woldemariam - Country Director

Ayele Ashagre - Education Program Manager

Tesfaw Mohammed - Education Program Manager

Sewit Getachew - Education Program Manager

Sosina Yirga - Program Support Officer for Education

Lynley Mannell - Partnership Development Advisor (Program Office Based Volunteer)

Volunteers

Addis Ababa

David Songhurst (Higher Diploma Program Moderator - Ministry of Education (MoE))

Maureen Songhurst (Higher Diploma Program Moderator - MoE)

Joanne Cairns (CPD Advisor - MoE)

Angela Norman (CPD Advisor - MoE)

Colin Holliday (Non-Formal Education Advisor - MoE)

Mekelle

Martin Cusworth (Inservice Teacher Trainer and CPD Advisor - Mekelle City Education Office)

Sebeta CTE

Mary Clarke (Inclusion Advisor - Sebeta College)

Jamie Hudson (Higher Diploma Leader - Sebeta College)

Assela CTE

Susan Brady (English Language Improvement Program Coordinator - Assela CTE)

Hazel Hollanders (CPD Coordinator)

DFID

Chris Berry (Education Advisor – DFID - Ethiopia)

Partners

In the Ministry of Education:

Mr. Fuad Ibrahim (State Minister of Education)

Mr. Tewodros Shewarget (Teacher Development Department Head)

Mr. Adane Mamo (Non-Formal Education Department)

Sebeta CTE

Mr. Jemal Abdulkadir (English Language Department Head)

Mr. Tesfaye Fekadu (Higher Diploma Leader of the college)

Mr. Reta Kumsa (Vice Dean of the College and also Department Head of Special Needs Education).

Asella College of Teacher Education

Ato. Boki –Dean

Ato. Nigussie - Head of Pre-service/ Line manager

Ato. Gebi T – Head of In-service/ Line manager

Ato. Gebi M – Counterpart CPD/In-service team

Ato. Adugna – Professional science/ worked with CCPD

Ato. Nigussu – Counterpart/ICT

Ato. Jeyilan - Counterpart/ICT

Ato. Ambesie – In-service Team/ previous counterpart

Ato. Tesfaye A – In-service Team

Wzo. Frehiwot –Counterpart/ English

Wzo. Aberash – English/ worked with ELIC

Wzo. Zebenay – English/worked with ELIC

Ato. Eshetu – Counterpart/ HDP leader/Language

Mekelle City Education Office

Fesseha Tadesse, Vice Head of Mekelle City Education Office

Zemenfeskidus Fisssha, Teacher Development Programme (TDP) Coordinator

Mulubirhan Girmay, Quality Assurance Department Head

Arefe-Aynie, Cluster Supervisor

Atsei Yohannes Primary School

Woldeselassie, Director/principal

Amanuel, Vice Principal

3. In the UK

Focus Group Discussion, 6th October 2010 with Relevant VSO Staff in Head Office

Polly Kirby – PDA Education

Rebecca Sinclair – PDA HIV and AIDS

Nicola Chevis – Team Leader Planning and Review

Sara Cottingham – Deputy Director Policy

Mike Podmore –Policy and Advocacy Adviser (PAA) HIV and AIDS

Purna Shrestha – PAA Education

Bob Ruxton/Mary Garvey – Director Policy

Jill Heeley – LINKS and National Volunteering Manager

Mary Garvey – Policy Director

Interviews in VSO London

Polly Kirby and Purna Shrestha – Education

Barbara Trapani – Disability

Rebecca Sinclair – HIV & AIDS

Mike Podmor – Advocacy

Nicola Chevis – Team Leader Planning and Review

Interview for BSD

Anne McCabe

ANNEX 3: DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

General

- Final PPA Evaluation TOR
- Final PPA Performance Framework 2008
- PPA Baseline Report 2008
- VSO Annual Self Assessment 2008–9
- VSO Annual Self Assessment and all supporting documents and annexes 2010
- PAR guide
- VSO Impact Assessment Scoping Paper
- Consolidated Scoping Paper Plan for 2010 PPA Self Assessment
- PPA SA 2010 Evaluation Guidance Notes for Workstreams 1–3
- VSO Theory of Change
- DFID Annual Review: DVP Development Awareness 2010
- VSO Value for Money assessment of PPA Evaluation July 2010
- Path of Partnership

For HIV & AIDS in Nepal

- Programme Area Review HIV/AIDS 2009/10
- Partner Assessment Reports for all partners visited
- Various documents, reports and supplementary reading from each Partner organisation visited
- HIV and AIDS Goal Report 2009

For Education in Ethiopia

- Programme Area Review Education 2009/10
- Partner Assessment Reports for all partners visited
- Education Goal Report 2010
- Education Programme Area Review 2010–14
- Working in Partnership to Address Gender Inequality in Education 2010
- Putting Children at the Centre of Education: How VSO Supports Practice and Policy in Primary Schools, Ethiopia 2008
- Lessons from VSO Ghana and VSO Ethiopia
- Various documents, reports and supplementary reading from each partner visited

For Disability

- Disability Goal Report 2010

For Advocacy

- Workshop on VSO Ethiopia Education Programme /Gender Equality Strategy Feb 2010
- A Summary of Advocacy Work, at VSO June 09
- Where does Advocacy take place in VSO? A 'map' of advocacy locations
- Participatory Advocacy Toolkit for VSO Staff, Partners and Volunteers

For Building Support for Development

- DV DFID final Review 2010
- Development Awareness DPPA Case Studies 2010

ANNEX 4: TIMELINE OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS AND FIELD TRIP SCHEDULES

Maureen O'Flynn – Timeline for evaluation

Date	Activity
27 th July	Meet with Anne McCabe and write up
3-7 th September	Background reading and prep for field trip
12 September – 17 th September	Field trip to Nepal
19 th September – 5 th October	Discuss and write up Nepal findings Plan report structure and format Prepare for Ethiopia field trip Design and send questions to London Follow up requests for information and further questionnaires to Nepal
6 th October	Interviews in VSO London
6 th October – 17 th October	Discuss and write up London Findings Write section on Building Support for Development Review VfM report and write section Plan for Ethiopia
17 th October – 23 rd October	Field trip to Ethiopia
25 th October – 2 nd November	Discuss and write up Ethiopia Complete disability and advocacy component Write up feedback from volunteers, programme managers and reps from other related agencies Complete first draft of report and sent to London
12 th November – 17 th November	Revise report according to feedback and compile annexes
Total	

Detailed schedule for Ethiopia field trip 17th – 22nd October 2010

Date	Time	Details of Schedule
Sunday, 17 October 2010	01:45am	Arrange pick up from the airport for Joe McMartin
	11:30am	Arrange pick up from the airport for Maureen O'Flynn
	PM	Take some rest
	6:00pm–8:00pm	Dinner with VSO-Ethiopia staff
Monday, 18 th October 2010	08:45am	Drive to the programme office
	09:00am–09:30am	Attend general staff meeting
	10:00am–11:15am	Interview with VSO Ethiopia Staff – the Country Director and 1 education program manager (about partnership with MoE, PPA partners, impact assessment process, any other relevant issues)
	11:15am–11:30pm	Drive to MoE

	11:30am–12:30pm	Meeting with State minister of General Education and other relevant staff in MoE
	12:30pm–2:00pm	Lunch
	2:00pm–3:00pm	Training on Impact Assessment – How can we measure change? For all PMs, PSOs and any other interested staff
	3:00pm–04:15pm	Continued – Interview with VSO Ethiopia Staff (about partnership with MoE, PPA partners, impact assessment process, any other relevant issues)
	04:15pm–05:30pm	Informal meeting with volunteers based in the MoE
Tuesday, 19 th October 2010	07:00am–09:00am	Fly to Mekelle
	09:00am–10:00am	Breakfast in Axum Hotel in Mekelle
	11:00am–12:30pm	Meeting with Mekelle City Education Office (Mekelle CEO) Staff and Martin Cusworth (VSO volunteer based in Mekelle CEO)
	12:30pm–2:00pm	Lunch break
	2:00pm–3:30pm	FGD with beneficiaries (students in Lekatit 11 primary school)
	Evening	Stay overnight in Mekelle and dinner with Martin Cusworth
Wednesday, 20 th October 2010	08:30am–09:30am	Travel back to Addis
	10:00am–10:30am	Travel to Sebeta College of Teachers Education CTE
	10:30am–11:30am	Meeting with Sebeta CTE staff & volunteers based in Sebeta CTE
	11:30am–12:30pm	FGD with beneficiaries (students in Sebeta CTE)
	12:30pm–2:00pm	Lunch
	02:00pm–05:30pm	Travel to Assela
	Evening	Stay overnight in Assela
Thursday, 21 st October 2010	09:00am–10:30am	Meeting with Assela CTE Staff and volunteers
	11:00am–12:30pm	FGD with beneficiaries (teachers in cluster schools)
	12:30pm–2:00pm	Lunch
	2:00pm–5:30pm	Travel back to Addis – if possible stop over in Adama and visit Adama University
Friday, 22 nd October 2010	09:00am–09:45am	More 1:1s with VSOE Education team if necessary
	09:45am–10:00am	Drive to DFID
	10:00am–11:15am	Meeting with Chris Berry in DFID
	11:30am–1:00pm	Debriefing with Wube and Education Team.
	1:00pm–2:00pm	Lunch with education team
	PM	1:1 meeting if any issues left, shopping, looking around Addis, etc.
	05:15pm	Drive Maureen to Bole Airport

Detailed Schedule for Nepal Ethiopia field trip 13–17 September 2010

Date	Time	Details of Schedule
13 September 2010	9:30–10:00	Tea meeting with VSO Nepal staff
	10:00–12:00	Interview with VSO Nepal Staff- CD, all three PMs, PDOs (around effectiveness of PPA process), more in detail with Smriti & Pemu (HIV & AIDS Programme)
	12:00–12:30	Lunch
	01:00–03:00	Meeting with Prerana
	04:00–05:00	FGD with beneficiaries of Prerana
14 th September 2010	08:30	Fly to Pokhara
	10:00–12:00	Interview (meeting) with Naulo Ghumti
	12:00–1:00	Lunch break
	1:00–2:00	FGD with beneficiaries of NGN (More female IDUs & a number of male IDUs)
	3:00–4:00	Brief visit to Community Support Group (one of HIV & AIDS programme partner in Pokhara)
	06:00–07:00	Informal meeting with vols in Pokhara (6 from education programme & two from HIV & AIDS programme)
15 September 2010	09:30	Fly Back to Kathmandu
	11:00–1:00	Interview (meeting with Blue Diamond Society) also some detailed talk on Policy related issues & progress
	01:00–02:00	Lunch break
	03:00–5:00	Meeting with GWP & BIJAM (talking about experience of implementing NV pilot learning project of HIV & AIDS Programme), PPA general reflection
16 September 2010	09:30–10:30	Meeting with VSO Nepal NV officer, Mr Jeevan Shrestha
	10:30–12:00	Meeting with Basanta Chettri, General Secretary of National Association of People Living with HIV & AIDS (talking around national policy level issues, changes, progress, update)
	12:00–1:00	Lunch
	01:00–05:00	Finalizing DFID PPA evaluation work in Nepal (time to cover any left issues, further clarification)
17 September 2010	10:00–12:30	Meeting of Nepal Team with Joe (Discussion topic – Corporate strategy review and new CSP development process)
	01:00–05:00	More 1:1 interaction with Nepal team member

ANNEX 5: METHODOLOGY OF NEW ECONOMICS FOUNDATION EVALUATIONS - VALUE FOR MONEY

1. Cost-effectiveness

The evaluation analysed the data from the PPA baseline and impact assessment 2008–10, selecting two indicators – one from the HIV & AIDS goal, and one from the education goal. This involved examining data from sample countries, and the way that focus groups defined quality. The parameters of data are detailed below.

Malawi

Total number of partners: 6
Total reach: 38,512
Number of focus groups: 6
Average number of volunteers per partner: 1
Number of partners in sample: 3
Reach of sample: 16,602

Bangladesh

Total number of partners: 11
Total reach: 3,296
Number of focus groups: 7
Average number of volunteers per partner: 1
Number of partners in sample: 3
Reach of sample: 714

Ghana

Total number of partners: 36
Total reach (girls): 217,583
Number of focus groups: 9
Average number of volunteers per partner: 1.5–2.5
Number of partners in sample: 8
Reach of sample (girls): 56,476

Ethiopia

Total number of partners: 33
Total reach (girls): 363,755
Number of focus groups: 10
Average number of volunteers per partner: 1.5–2
Number of partners in sample: 5
Reach of sample (girls): 115,866
Reach sample (stud teacher): 13,767

2. Efficiency Evaluation

The study involved the following steps:

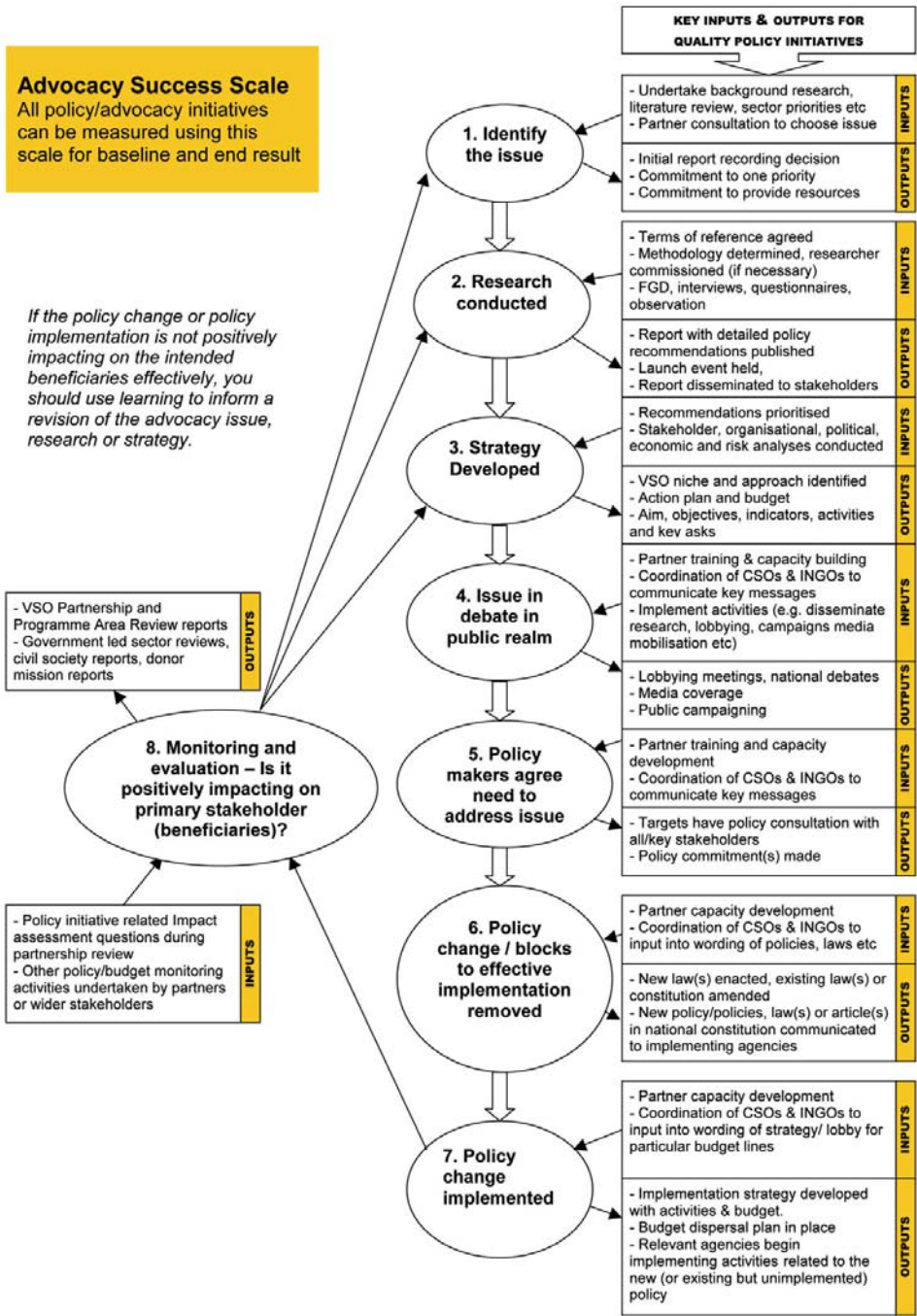
1. Initial investigation to clarify the nature and extent of VSO procurement activity.
2. Collation, scrutiny and analysis of relevant VSO policy, practice and procedural guidance. Copies of the memorandum and articles of association together with the latest available annual report and accounts were also obtained.
3. Collation, scrutiny and analysis of materials covering the arrangements that VSO has for the internal quality assurance of procurement and fiduciary risk management processes.

4. Collation, scrutiny and analysis of materials covering the arrangements that VSO has for internal assessment of compliance with procurement and fiduciary risk management policy, practice and procedural guidance.
5. Independent sampling of past and current procurements to assess current compliance with procurement and fiduciary risk management best practice guidance. A list of eligible procurements from the purchase ledger covering a recent 12-month period was supplied and a sample of 12 purchases was selected.
6. Interviews with selected staff to identify how well they assess the functionality and value of current policies, guidance and systems for controlling and auditing procurement and fiduciary risk management. Meetings were conducted with the head of policy, key personnel responsible for facilities procurement and personnel responsible for maintenance of the purchase ledger. There were also follow-up enquiries by telephone and email to clarify outstanding issues.

ANNEX 6: THE VSO ADVOCACY SUCCESS SCALE

Advocacy Success Scale
 All policy/advocacy initiatives can be measured using this scale for baseline and end result

If the policy change or policy implementation is not positively impacting on the intended beneficiaries effectively, you should use learning to inform a revision of the advocacy issue, research or strategy.



ANNEX 7: ACRONYMS

ARV	Anti Retro Viral treatment for HIV virus
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CBR	Community Based Rehabilitation
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
DPO	Disabled People's Organisation
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
EMIS	Education Management and Information Systems
IT	Information Technology
IDU	Intravenous Drug User
HIV & AIDS	HIV & AIDS
LGBTI	Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transvestite
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MOE	Ministry of Education
MSM	Men who have Sex with Men
NV	National Volunteering – where local people volunteer in their own community or in another part of their own country
OD	Organisational Development
PAR	Programme Area Review (VSO)
PDA	Programme Development Adviser (VSO staff)
PLWA	People Living with AIDS
PolVol	Political Volunteer (UK and Ireland MPs on short term placements)
PPA	Programme Partnership Agreement
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
RV	Returned Volunteer
USAID	Unite States Aid
VfM	Value for Money
WLWA	Women Living with AIDS