

Programme Area Summary

Country: Uganda

Programme Area: Participation and Governance 2003-2008

What is the aim of the programme area?

In order to improve the quality of life of the disadvantaged, VSO Uganda aims to increase effectiveness and appropriateness of basic services. We will do this by strengthening the capacity of civil society to influence service delivery and to support 'good governance' in service providers.

Why is VSO working in that particular Programme Area and region?

To most Ugandans, development has for long been considered something that comes to them from the government or donors. It is not a process that they usually themselves initiated, monitored, controlled or owned. Over the years, the government has attempted to change this top-down approach to development. The introduction of the Local Council (previously Resistance Council) system, which runs from the village through parish, sub-county/local council, to the district level, and subsequently decentralisation, were attempts to enable local communities to determine and control their own destiny.

One of the objectives of the Local Government Act of 1997 is to ensure greater cohesion through the different layers of governmental planning.

However, corruption is still a major problem and could derail the reform process unless improved management systems are adopted and supported by government, politicians and community leaders. In addition, a weak civil society lacks the ability to mobilise demand for basic services.

It is against this background that VSO Uganda aims to strengthen the voice of the civil society organisations to demand basic services and 'good governance', while at the same time working with the local government (district and national level) and other service providers, to improve on 'good governance'.

Key beneficiaries and partners

Main partners VSO will be working with towards this PAP are:

- District local government
- NGOs & CBOs
- Advocacy groups
- Lobby groups
- Pressure groups
- 'Think Tanks'

Helping Civil Society organisations to engage with Government, both at the district as well as the national levels.

Key objectives of the programme and the cross-cutting themes

In our four target districts and working at the national level in Kampala over the next 5 years VSO Uganda will:

1. Build the capacity of civil society organizations to better represent their constituents and to obtain high quality services from the appropriate service providers on their behalf.
2. To build the capacity of partner service providers to put 'good governance' into practice, with a specific focus on strategic planning, accountability, responsiveness, effectiveness & efficiency

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3. Contribute to strengthening of the decentralisation process in Uganda in order to improve basic services for disadvantaged people This will be by sharing learning from experience at district level in National Fora (e.g. Ministry of Local Government, key donors)

Participation and Governance (P&G) is a broad theme. The Participation part reflects VSOU's aim to strengthen the ability of people to participate in their communities and influence decisions that affect their lives. The Governance part reflects VSOU's aim to strengthen the capacity of those organisations that have to deliver what the people have asked for. These two aspects link closely to VSOU's other two programmes, on Disability and Health.

VSO Uganda is committed to gender equity and addressing HIV and AIDS. Progress in effectively addressing disadvantage through any approach is significantly constrained if these themes are not specifically included. Gender and HIV and AIDS will be appropriately reflected in all VSO Uganda programmes.

Current programme activities

Focus of International Volunteer Placements

- We are currently fine-tuning the P&G PAP. While the previous overall target has been an average of 55 volunteers at any time of the year, with the implementation of the Health and Disability PAPs, we anticipate an even distribution of volunteers with an average 15-20 for the P&G PAP. .
- The volunteers in P&G will mainly be involved in institutional and organizational capacity building, hence having management experience with appropriate technical skills where necessary.

Workshops, training & conferences

- VSO will participate in at least one conference a year related to decentralisation

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

- The combination of long term and short-term placements in Uganda is quite successful as are other elements of programme activities.
- Quite a lot of international partners are visiting Uganda to learn from the programmes.