

## *Programme Area Summary*

**Country:** Uganda

**Programme Area:** Disability 2005-2010

### **What is the aim of the programme area?**

VSO Uganda disability programme aims to increase access to quality basic and specialized services for people with disabilities (PWDs) in 22 focus districts in south-west, western and central Uganda.

### **Why is VSO working in that particular programme area and region?**

Disability leads to socio-economic disadvantages, denial of rights and, limited opportunities for the individuals concerned to play an equal part in the life of the family/community and in their own personal lives. 10% of the population of Uganda (approximately 2.8 million) is estimated to have a disability. Of the 2.8 million PWD, it is estimated that over 1.4 million are children below the age of 16. Although there is a disability policy and planning framework in place in Uganda, there is a poor track record translating it into practice on the ground. This is because:

- there is limited human and financial resourcing of key government departments (especially Community Development & Rehabilitation) combined with poor planning and budgeting skills.
- representatives of PWDs do not engage effectively with decision making processes in order to shape good quality responses. This is partly due to stigma, cultural attitudes towards PWDs, lack of Civil Society Organisations' (CSO) experience in lobbying and negotiation and low general awareness of the rights of PWDs. It's also due to the fact that disabled peoples' organisations (DPOs) are weak organisationally and have poor representation in the districts.

This means that there is poor delivery of key basic and specialised services. This is both a human rights and a development issue.

### **Who are the key beneficiaries and partners?**

Final beneficiaries will include children with disabilities, their parents and PWDs in general.

- District Local Governments (DLGs) are key partners in VSO work in all the 22 focus districts. They have established structures and the mandate to plan and provide services to communities throughout each district. DLGs are mandated by law to coordinate all activities in their geographical area of jurisdiction. Our Disability programme targets service planners in DLGs and CSOs structures – political leaders and their technical advisors.
- We also work in partnership with DPOs in the 22 focus districts and their umbrella organisations based in Kampala – targeting PWDs, leadership and family members.
- The programme also involves working with Primary Teachers' Colleges (PTCs). Together with Uganda National Institute of Special Needs Education [UNISE], PTCs are responsible for equipping teachers with skills in handling children with disabilities.
- To ensure quality and conformity with national policies/standards, the programme will also involve working closely with national level institutions like the Ministries of: Health, Education, Gender and community Development amongst others.

### **What are the key objectives of the programme and the cross-cutting themes?**

Our Disability programme has three main objectives:

- To improve human and financial resource allocation to key government departments as well as their skills in budgeting and planning.

## *Programme Area Summary*

- Organisational strengthening of Disabled People's Organisations [DPOs], Civil Society Organisations, Local Governments and Government Institutions that deliver social services to PWDs
- To build the technical skills of staff in planning and delivery of basic and specialised services. More especially education, health and community development and rehabilitation.

Our disability programme is linked to the two other VSO programme areas, health and participation and governance. VSO Uganda is committed to gender equity and addressing HIV and AIDS and acknowledges that progress in effectively addressing disadvantage is significantly constrained if these themes are not specifically included. Gender and HIV and AIDS will be appropriately reflected in all our work.

### **Current Programme Activities**

#### *Focus of International Volunteer Placements*

All VSO's disability programme volunteers fall under the three programme Components:

- Participation of PWDs in key decision making: Volunteers work with DPOs/CSOs and Community Development Department/disability initiatives. The placements range from sign language trainers, Advocacy specialists to programme advisers & coordinators and, more recently, fundraisers. Short-term volunteers are requested to carry out Organisation Capacity Assessments (OCAs) of DPOs, Needs Assessment, field research on disability issues, Strategic planning sessions with government departments.
- Resource Allocation to Community Based Services: Volunteers work with the Planning Department; the Education Department, especially the Inspectorate; the Community Development Department and district health services, including Planners and IT Specialists (usually NetCorps volunteers). Other interventions involve analysis of local governments/partners' budgets to inform our planning, lobbying and advocacy work on disability issues.
- Building Technical skills of staff in Planning and Delivery of Basic and Specialised services: Volunteers are requested by Primary Teachers' Colleges (PTCs) to serve as Special Needs Education (SNE) tutors, teachers and advisors targeting pre-service teachers. Volunteers also work with school managers, head teachers and Centre Coordinators Tutors (CCTs) as part of the PTC's in-service outreach programme. VSO Uganda is in the process of creating partnerships with National Teachers' Colleges, where most head-teachers for primary schools are trained. Ultimately this will enable us to introduce SNE volunteers in Speech and Language Therapy (SLT), orthopaedics, mental health, etc

#### *Workshops, training & conferences*

- Training in lobbying & negotiation skills
- Activities for increased human and financial resources for community based services in various districts and national level institutions

#### *Research*

- Research on existing myths, beliefs and attitudes towards PWDs to inform our work in lobbying & advocacy.

#### *Advocacy and Global Education*

- Advocacy/awareness-raising on the rights of PWD (and particularly women)
- Advocacy on existing government policy on disability
- Targeted at service planners, providers and implementers in different sectors/at various levels

#### *Partner exchange visits/study tours*

- Learning exchanges for partners/volunteers
- Exchange visits within the East Africa region for sharing of learning experiences.

## *Programme Area Summary*

### *Providing grants and/or equipment for partners*

- Facilitate work on establishment of Community Based Rehabilitation [CBR] initiatives.
- Facilitate improved engagement of service providers with disability issues and DPOs advocacy agenda.

### *Development of publications or other materials for training or communication*

- Advocacy messages
- Training manual for service providers in education, health, community, etc
- Development of course/SNE modules/programmes in PTCs, etc

### *Other partnership activities*

- Organising partners' forum for sharing experiences and improving their participation in the programme
- Review workshops involving staff, partners and volunteers, and stakeholder events for sharing learning and good practice

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

- Disability is a social construct. Because our volunteers live and work with their colleagues in the communities, they gain an in-depth understanding of the context and, thus they can challenge it effectively and, thus address disability issues.
- Creating opportunity for full participation of VSO partners and beneficiaries – specifically the marginalized groups
- VSO brings a wealth of first hand experiences relevant for purposes of planning, advocacy and, thus influencing policy at local and national levels.
- The spirit of volunteerism has always been a central element in many successful development initiatives. VSO will promote that element – together with professionalism, integrity, enthusiasm and ethical standards.
- VSO presents opportunities for international networking, and regional learning.
- All VSO Uganda's interventions have been implemented in partnership with experienced national level government and civil society actors in the area of disability who are all part of the recognised national structures for addressing issues of disability.