



VSO Rwanda youth and national volunteering programme overview

Context

Volunteerism and volunteering are anchored in the Rwandan culture. Rwanda has a rich tradition of volunteerism featured through self-help and mutual aid activities as well as caring for the weak and rendering community service.

Despite the fact that there are voluntary interventions in various sectors including local governance, justice, health and electoral processes, there is no harmonised and coordinated framework for managing volunteers and valuing their interventions. Through the Ministry of Youth the government of Rwanda has recently developed a National Volunteerism Policy in an effort to respond to the enormous needs of the country and to alleviate socio-economic constraints experienced by individuals or their communities and improve their quality of life.

With regard to youth development, as is the case in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa, Rwanda has a very young population with 43% of the total population under the age of 14. As a response to the needs of young people in Rwanda, the Ministry of Youth intends to address national priorities for economic growth and poverty reduction through youth empowerment. The government of Rwanda has made achieving the MDGs central to its policy framework, outlined in the Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS) 2008-2012. The EDPRS incorporates a number of cross-cutting issues, including environment, HIV and AIDS, gender, social inclusion and youth.

VSO Rwanda programme

Youth and national volunteering is a relatively new programme within VSO Rwanda. The Country Strategic Plan (CSP) indicates that the work we are doing in youth and national volunteering programme is being framed more as an approach than a programme in its own right. Our focus is on increased synergy between programmes, and more holistic programming. Over the past few years, the national volunteering programme has been focussing more on youth, and there is interest in the Ministry of Youth in engaging more with VSO – this is an area we expect will grow, particularly around access to employment issues.

The purpose of the programme is that VSO has a significant youth programme supporting government plans for greater youth involvement, active citizenship, skills development and access to employment.

The objective we work towards is to increase opportunities for young Rwandans to contribute towards Rwanda's development through volunteerism, active citizenship, skill development and increased access to employment opportunities.

The outputs we aim to achieve are:

- Youth in Rwanda are more actively engaged in their communities and have increased skills that are relevant to the Rwandan labour market, ultimately resulting in increased employment.



- The government of Rwanda recognises volunteering is seen as a way to develop an individual capacity and as a significant contributor to the country's development.

This will be attained by building on VSO's experience in international volunteering so as to strengthen the capacity of state and non-state actors working with volunteers and harness the contribution of national volunteers to addressing poverty and disadvantage in Rwanda. Volunteerism (including international, Diaspora and national forms of volunteering) will be integral to all of VSO Rwanda's work.

The youth and national volunteering programme's current partners and their volunteers include:

- Ministry of Youth and ICT (Jobs creation and self-employment development advisers)
- Parlement des Jeunes Rwandais (PAJER) (Institutional development adviser)
- Workforce Development Authority (WDA) (planning to receive new technical and vocational master trainers)
- Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) (Project outreach and education manager)
- Ikirezi Natural Products (Management adviser)