

Programme Area Summary

Country: Malawi

Programme Area: Education 2005 – 2010

What is the aim of the programme area

To improve education access, equity and quality as a right for all young people.

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

Through its education programme, VSO Malawi is seeking to address the following education issues:

- *Access:* Free primary education was introduced in 1994 and while there's now 95% enrolment at primary level, the government is unable to train sufficient teachers and provide sufficient facilities to cope with expanding education system and to meet demand, not only at primary level, but also at secondary and tertiary levels.
- *Equity:* There are regional, district and socio-economic disparities regarding access to and quality of education, plus low participation of girls, women, children with special needs and other disadvantaged young people.
- *Quality:* Increased demand for primary education resulted in chronic shortage and inadequacy of teachers and facilities and a high pupil: qualified teacher ratio (62:1 primary). Many teachers are unqualified. Of 140,000 pupils attending secondary school, 100,000 attend the Community Day Secondary Schools (CDSS), where they are mostly taught by unqualified or insufficiently trained teachers.

Key beneficiaries and partners

VSO works with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST) by placing volunteers at the Teacher Training Colleges to support pre-service teacher training at primary level. In addition, in 2005 VSO Malawi successfully initiated a new programme, funded through DFID, in partnership with the Department of Teacher Education and Development (DTED), to support the continuing professional development of primary school teachers in 7 of VSO Malawi's focus districts. VSO Malawi is also increasing its partnerships with non-governmental/civil society organizations, such as the Civil Society Coalition for Quality Basic Education (CSCQBE), FAWEMA (Forum for African Women Educationalist Malawi) and the Teachers Union of Malawi (TUM).

Key objectives of the programme and the cross-cutting themes

VSO Malawi intends to take a broad approach to education issues in support of the global goals. By focusing on the following three objectives VSO Malawi will tackle the issues of access, equity and quality at both the macro and micro level in eight focus districts:

- To improve the quality of teaching to ensure the delivery of quality education
- To increase the capacity of partner organisations and the government to offer non-formal education to boys and girls who can't go to school to ensure they can gain life and basic literacy skills
- To influence the development, implementation and dissemination of relevant policies for a better education environment in the country

Crosscutting themes

HIV & AIDS, Gender, and Disability. For example education volunteers, in consultation with stakeholders, have developed a Disability Toolkit that will enable all teachers to assess children's needs and support them accordingly.

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Current programme activities (as planned at the time of the last Programme Area Review)

Focus of International Volunteer Placements:

Volunteers have been placed in (primary) Teacher Training Colleges (TTC) to support pre-service teacher training (subject-focused) and are also supporting the development of IT training and library management and use in colleges. This programme is being phased out by 2008. In addition, volunteers are working as Continuing Professional Development Facilitators (for primary teachers), based at District Education Offices / Teacher Development Centres (TDC). This TDC programme will be expanded to accommodate a maximum of 24 volunteers by 2008. There is also a proposal to place volunteers at selected Community Day Secondary Schools (CDSS) from 2008 to work in combined teaching/teacher training roles, if funding is approved. Volunteers will also be placed with the NGO/CSO partners with which VSO works to build capacity and to support their work in education.

Workshops, training & conferences

The Education volunteers in Malawi have a very strong peer support network, through which they meet regularly to share ideas and best practice. Apart from this, every year the programme has an Education Programme workshop, which involves all partners and volunteers in the sector to review progress, share experiences, and learning.

Advocacy and Global Education:

An education advocacy review was conducted in December 2005, which has resulted in plans to develop an advocacy strategy for the Education Programme in future. VSO Malawi has been exploring ways in which volunteers based at the TDCs or TTCs can participate in GCE activities organised by CSCQBE.

Partner exchange visits/study tours:

Within the education programme volunteers and colleagues visit other placements to share learning. This has led to increased motivation amongst partners to improve their work based on learning from other placements.

Providing grants and/or equipment for partners e.g. small grants fund:

All TDC placements are funded by DFID and this covers both the TDC activities and equipment (e.g. computers, transport). In all other non-funded placements volunteers and partners have access to the placement support fund, which is available to assist them in any project related activities.

Development of publications or other materials for training or communication:

In the TDC programme, volunteers and partners have access to publication funding, which they have used to produce newsletters to improve networking between districts. Also through this funding volunteers and partners have developed the aforementioned Disability Toolkit.

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

VSO Malawi is making a significant contribution to the in-service training of teachers through the TDC programme with volunteers working with the Primary Education Advisors across districts to ensure they have a consistent approach to supporting (often untrained) teachers. This is an area which was previously lacking support and which has become even more critical as a new primary curriculum is rolled out in 2007.