

## *Programme Area Summary*

**Country:** Malawi

**Programme Area:** Health & Social Well-being (2005-2010)

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

The Ministry of Health's 'Human Resources of Health' sector wide approach (SWAp) aims to co-ordinate efforts to contribute towards sustained improvements in the quality and access to preventive and curative health services in Malawi, targeting the disadvantaged particularly in the rural areas.

UK Department for International Development is the main partner/donor. VSO and other NGO's (e.g. UNV, DED and JICA) play a significant role in stop-gap filling of clinical and training posts.

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

The Malawian health services are facing a crisis in Human Resources:

- Chronic understaffing (e.g. 1 doctor for every 62 000 population, one nurse for every 4 000 population).
- Insufficient Training & staff development, exacerbated by high staff turnover rates. There is little continuing professional development.
- Health Infrastructure: with 484000 people per district hospital, health services are overstretched, made up of a range of buildings, equipment and medical supplies with little central co-ordination and which are often impossible to maintain in the Malawian context.
- Regular and extreme shortages of essential equipment and drugs occur, made worse by management problems, including corruption and general poor distribution of stocks at the Central Medical Stores

### **Key beneficiaries and partners**

Ultimate beneficiaries are people who have little or no access to adequate health care in the districts, especially in terms of obstetric and paediatric care.

Main Partners are MoH, DFID and WHO, who have a leading role in co-ordinating SWAp.

International NGOs working together are for instance UNV, CIM, GTZ, JICA and DED

Local health partners include:

- Central Hospitals (MoH)
- District Hospitals (MoH & CHAM, Christian Health Association of Malawi)
- Nursing schools in the districts (MoH & CHAM)
- Malawi College of Health Sciences (MCHS)
- College of Medicine, University of Malawi
- Mzuzu University
- St John of God
- Zomba Mental Hospital
- Nurses and Midwives council
- Zonal MoH offices

VSO Malawi supports a number of Disability related organisations including Kachere Rehab Centre and Malawi Council for the Handicapped (MACOHA) as one way of mainstreaming disability into the Health Programme.

### **Key objectives of the programme**

VSO Malawi's main strategy to support the Ministry of Health will focus on supporting the training of Malawian health professionals in different nursing and medical schools, as well as in clinical settings, in order to increase the number of well trained medical staff in all hospitals in Malawi.

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- Building the capacity of the MoH through the training of local Malawian health professionals in a range of disciplines and through continuing professional development of existing staff
- To contribute to improved care, treatment and support to sick people including those with HIV and AIDS in VSO's focus district hospitals and selected CHAM hospitals.
- To contribute to the improved maintenance of physical assets used in the health service.
- To explore opportunities for partnerships in the area of prevention within the Ministry of Health
- To explore how VSO could support advocacy for better health services

### **Current programme activities**

#### *Focus of International Volunteer Placements*

- Long Term Volunteer (LTV) Medical Officers for Nsanje, Thyolo, Mwanza, Ntcheu, Ntchisi, Rumphu and Chitipa District Hospitals, plus a few CHAM hospitals who have signed a service agreement with the Ministry of Health to provide free services to surrounding communities, especially in maternal and paediatric care.
- LTV/Short Term Volunteer (STV) Specialists for Central Hospitals e.g. surgery and obstetrics
- LTV Nursing & Midwifery Clinical Instructors for MoH and CHAM nursing schools
- LTV Teachers and Lecturers to Clinical officers, Medical officers and Nursing colleges (e.g. MCHS, College of Medicine, Mzuzu University)
- LTV Rehab professionals to Kachere Rehabilitation Centre
- Hospital Maintenance Specialists working in hospitals/zonal MoH offices (programme with GTZ currently being re-negotiated)
- Psychiatric Care specialists for St John of God and Zomba mental Hospital

There are currently 40-50 volunteers in Malawi. Expansion of the VSO programme to 100 volunteers by 2010 is being discussed with DFID. Potential new placements with district hospitals/nursing schools, support to Nurses and Midwives Council, improving medical laboratory services in district hospitals, hospital maintenance and primary health care/prevention. To support this work, VSO is working on two new recruitment partnerships:

- NHS Scottish Executive/VSO partnership. Recruitment of NHS staff to work as VSO volunteers.
- Partnership with the UK Royal College of Pediatricians to bring in volunteers for a period of 12 months to Queen Elizabeth Hospital/College of Medicine.

#### *Workshops, training & conferences*

- Regular conferences/meetings with MoH, DFID, NGO's and volunteers

#### *Research*

- Research into possibility of placing more STV's, as well as involvement in PHC/prevention

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

- Links visit planned of key MoH staff to the Philippines. The Philippines, in spite of experiencing a similar HR crisis as a result of exodus of health personal to USA and other countries, has been better able to step up it's medical training guarantee a better health service in the country. It is hoped that learning about strategies used in the Philippines is taken back to Malawi.

#### *Advocacy*

- VSO will explore partnership with key advocacy bodies such as the Nurses Association and the Health Equity Network

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

- This is one of the largest VSO programmes, ambitious in scale and innovative.
- The programme is being monitored closely world-wide as a potential solution to similar health service crises in other developing countries. It is fully funded by DFID.
- Contributes to the fight against the human resource crisis the Ministry of Health is facing.