

Nigeria



VSO Nigeria Strategy
2012-15

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Foreword

VSO is the world's leading independent international development organisation that works through volunteers to fight poverty in developing countries. VSO's high-impact approach involves bringing people together to share skills, build capabilities, promote international understanding and action, and change lives to make the world a fairer place.

In Nigeria, our unique, but not exclusive, contribution is to identify and work in emergent areas using highly qualified volunteers to address poverty and the marginalisation of youth in an holistic way.

What VSO does

Work together: Our volunteers and programme staff work with partner organisations involved in education, secure livelihoods and citizen engagement, to build capacity (at individual, organisational and institutional levels) through transferring knowledge and experience. Our local partners use their skills, experience and cultural understanding to make an impact in their own communities.

Knowledge sharing: To address knowledge gaps, we facilitate knowledge exchange visits and linkages between partners (domestically and regionally). Through workshops, conferences and national and international exchanges we connect individuals and organisations so that they can share knowledge, perspectives, ideas and practices. This provides access to knowledge for those who are often excluded.

Advocacy: We conduct research; pilot and evaluate innovative approaches; give a voice to our beneficiaries and bring knowledge to those responsible for deciding on and implementing policy.

How we do it

Our efforts focus on increasing the impact of existing government and civil society development efforts to strengthen organisational and human capacities. We work alongside our partners, volunteers and ultimate beneficiaries in a consultative, inclusive and respectful manner in all stages of programme design, monitoring and evaluation because sustainability, empowerment and capacity building are our overarching goals. The work and ambition outlined in this plan recognises and appreciates existing accomplishments and shows our commitment to ongoing consultation and collaborative implementation.

Our vision

We know that youth, not oil, will be Nigeria’s most valuable resource in the 21st century.¹ VSO Nigeria has a vision that guides our country strategy:

We envision a society where young Nigerian men and women – who comprise 70% of the population – are leading healthy, productive and dignified lives; contributing meaningfully to national economic and social development; and participating actively in peaceful, democratic governance.

Our new vision is a society where the innovative energy of youth is harnessed for **social justice** in Nigeria and for **a world without poverty**.

We build the capacity of civil society and government partners and stakeholders to contribute to youth livelihoods

(employment/self-employment) through skills transfer and vocational training. We also build this capacity through improving the quality of, and access to, education for children and youth. We engage youth as active citizens in their own development through leadership training – mainstreaming gender equality and promoting peace, reconciliation and advocacy directed towards a youth-responsive policy environment.

Our key priority is to operate **youth-centred integrated programmes** to promote the productive engagement of youth in the peaceful development of Nigeria.

1. British Council, Harvard School of Public Health, *Next Generation Nigeria*, 2010

Quick facts

Population: Africa’s most populous state with over 158 million people.

Education: Nigeria has 10% of the world’s children out of school with 37% of the population having no formal schooling.

Health: Nigeria accounts for 10% of the world’s child and maternal death rates, the highest in Africa.

Youth: Seventy per cent of Nigerians are under 35 years of age with a median age of 18.5 years.

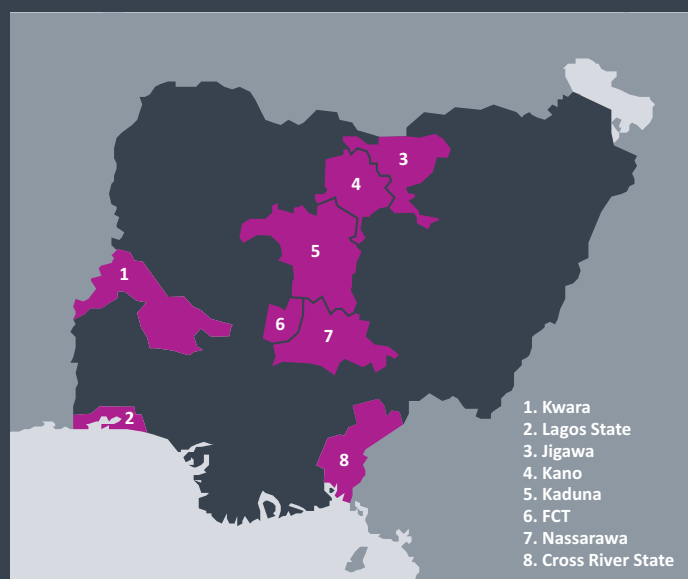
Economy: More than 100 million Nigerians (64%) live on less than £GB1 a day, with 33.9% of the population living in severe poverty.

Unemployment: More than 30% of Nigerians under 35 year olds are unemployed, with young women in this sector lagging far behind.

Gender: Nigeria ranks as one of the lowest in the world on the Gender Inequality Index.

Where we work

We focus in four geographic clusters: the north-west is a cluster of three states – Kaduna, Kano, and Jigawa; the north-central is a cluster of three states – FCT, Nassarawa and Kwara; the south-south is Cross River State; and the south-west is Lagos State. The added value of working in geographical clusters enables volunteers to be grouped. Partners can also interact and engage with each other more readily.



The context in Nigeria

VSO has operated across Nigeria since 1958 and has accompanied the country through complex social change and growth, as well as local conflict and instability. Nigeria is currently deemed a conflict affected and fragile state, defined by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) as a state where: “the government is unable/unwilling to provide core functions including service entitlement, justice and security”.² It is a country rich in oil and other natural and human resources yet remains developmentally poor. Many parts of Nigeria are peaceful. However, poverty and frustration have pushed predominantly young men in some northern states and the Niger Delta towards extremism and violence.

There are opportunities for change. Nigerian youth are harnessing new technologies, raising their voices and joining together to demand a stable, better-governed, gender-equitable and peaceful Nigeria.

Over 1,300 international VSO volunteers have worked in Nigeria since 1960. Our achievements include:

- Our leadership on climate change – including a short-term placement of a high-level political volunteer who built the capacity of the climate change network to advocate more effectively on the Climate Change Bill.
- Our leadership and innovation on disability in the areas of deaf education, HIV and AIDS and disability.
- Over 1.5 million children and youth have benefited from improved education as a result of teacher training, in-service training and community engagement (ultimate beneficiaries).
- Over 300,000 people have been reached with HIV and AIDS prevention messaging and access to care and support (direct beneficiaries).
- Over 250,000 people have been reached (direct beneficiaries) under our secure livelihoods programme – 1.5 million people have been impacted indirectly through advocacy leading to policy change (ultimate beneficiaries).

Who we work for

VSO Nigeria works with poor and marginalised young men and women in an integrated way. We shape our responses based on the needs and priorities they identify. We relate to youth as both ultimate beneficiaries, as well as some of our key implementers in bringing about positive change. We focus on school children (boys and girls), adolescent girls and boys (10-19 years old) and young men and women (20-35 years old).

We recognise that the social groups ‘youth’ and ‘children’ are not homogenous but rather significantly impacted by gender, geography, disability and educational access opportunities and constraints.



2. *DFID Bilateral Aid Review: Technical Report*, March 2011. ‘Need-effectiveness’ encompasses level of poverty (for need) and the quality of the institutional environment

Key outcomes

Our **overarching goal** is to reduce poverty and the vulnerability of youth in Nigeria.

Outcome one

Improved capacity of civil society, government and private sector stakeholders to enhance security of livelihoods and employment opportunities for young men and women.

We support youth-led or youth-serving partners to promote youth employment, and to promote young people's entrance along market value chains. Attention is given to identifying barriers and developing strategies to enable young women's participation in business, especially at higher levels. We support vocational skills training/apprenticeships especially for uneducated youth – equally important, we equip these youth with accompanying life skills around sexual and reproductive health and HIV and AIDS prevention in a youth-friendly way.

To stimulate pro-poor market chains, VSO Nigeria supports product and other market-related research, encourages socially responsible entrepreneurship to address social problems, provides technical assistance to formalise informal micro/small industries and facilitates access to micro-finance and other support services.

Outcome two

Improved capacity of civil society and government education partners and stakeholders to deliver and make accessible quality, inclusive education for children and youth.

Youth employability is linked to early education of children and appropriate vocational training – the capacity of teachers to teach effectively can, however, constrain quality education. Through international volunteers, we address some human resources gaps in the education sector and build the capacity of tutors and students in institutions responsible for pre-service and in-service teacher training, inclusive of Islamiya schools. We seek to strengthen oversight and supervision, and evidenced-based planning support through data collection. We also build the capacity of teachers to be more effective, including national volunteers.

We work with civil society organisational partners and respond to their needs. We promote behavioural change through communication and the dissemination of information to promote inclusive education, with particular emphasis on girls' education. We support vocational skills training for educated youth and offer accompanying life skills. Our International Citizen Service (ICS) youth volunteers work with students to help lobby local government and relevant authorities for increased teacher support, and more accessible education.

Outcome three

Improved capacity for knowledge and skills in advocacy and policy engagement to support social change, strengthened organisational development and gender-responsiveness of partners to deliver results.

We promote opportunities for young people to express their needs, demand their rights, and hold government accountable (especially with respect to youth employment and quality education). We seek opportunities to link with youth-led or youth serving advocacy organisations in raising the importance of these issues and promote and advocate on peace and reconciliation.

In our targeted geographic clusters, we play a key role in strengthening networks and coalitions around issues of shared concern to civil society organisations, local government and other international non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Through the development of a gender equality strategy and action plan, VSO Nigeria strengthens gender analysis to inform our programming focus and that of our partner organisations. Overall, we seek to strengthen the organisational development of partners to practice transparency and accountability, which in turn leads to better promotion of the needs of the communities they represent.

We also work with government and state institutions to foster a receptive environment for issues brought forward by civil society.



Partnership: the way we work

VSO's unique model of working through people brings something different to the table, alongside other international NGOs who contribute other resources. By working within national structures, our volunteers can help ensure lasting change by engaging in real development through day-to-day workings with the people of Nigeria.

We deeply value our existing partners and strive to strengthen these relationships while also developing new partnerships to achieve our objectives. We work at all levels of society to address issues in the most comprehensive way possible. Our partners include government partners, civil society partners, and other key stakeholders such as private enterprise, funders, networks and coalitions, professional associations and advocacy institutions.



Key volunteering skills needed

VSO Nigeria has an ongoing need for skilled, professional volunteers who contribute their expertise and experience in:

- teacher training and strengthening education systems
- vocational training
- organisational development and knowledge management
- youth entrepreneurship and business development
- product research and marketing
- information and communication technology (ICT) training

Implementation through volunteers

We work with a range of different volunteers:

National volunteers: Volunteerism is the backbone of many communities in Nigeria. We support community volunteers to improve food security and livelihoods and in turn, address the rural/urban migration of young people. Working with the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), we also place and support young graduates to improve the quality of education in rural communities and strengthen a culture of national volunteering.

Long-term international volunteering (professional placements of up to two years): Our volunteers help build social infrastructure by passing on their expertise. They come from both developing and developed countries.

Short-term specialist assignments (positions of six months and under): Our experienced professionals provide support on short-term assignments ranging from research studies and training seminars to exchange visits by members of parliament. **Diaspora volunteers:** We provide a mechanism for diaspora members to give back to their country of origin in a meaningful and targeted way.

Youth volunteers: Through the DFID-sponsored International Citizen Service (ICS) initiative we bring 18-25 year olds from across the UK to Nigeria for three-month placements. Through these placements, they can better appreciate the development challenges facing Nigeria and work side-by-side with local counterparts to help alleviate poverty.

Corporate volunteers: We offer private companies a unique way to support international development efforts and encourage employee engagement opportunities.

Regional volunteers: We build on natural migration patterns within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) countries and offer opportunities for individuals to contribute valuable time and gain professional growth and experience.

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