

Programme Area Summary

Country: Zambia

Programme Area: Gender and Food Security (Secure Livelihoods) 2005-2009

What is the aim of the programme area?

To ensure poor communities have food security, primarily by empowering women.

Why is VSO working in that particular Programme Area and region

Despite having large tracts of fertile land, only 14% of Zambia's arable land is currently utilized. As a result, Zambia has a big problem of food insecurity and high poverty levels. The government's policy towards farming and marketing within the agricultural sector has not effectively addressed national food security or improved rural incomes. This is further aggravated by gender inequalities where women who provide 70% of the labour force in food production are prevented from owning and controlling land. Agriculture provides employment to 67% of the country's labour force.

The programme is implemented in 3 provinces: Lusaka – which provides knowledge of the national development context, policy, networking, and funding opportunities and Eastern and Southern provinces which are rural, and more difficult to access, and which inform the advocacy work.

Key beneficiaries and partners:

The food security PAP has grown in the number of volunteers as well the number and type of partnerships that have been developed. The Food Security programme is working with 19 partners. Notable among partners and policy-making bodies in government are the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Community Development, Disaster Management and Mitigation Unit as well as INGOs such as the WFP and Golden Valley Agriculture and Research Trust (GART). We work with the following types of partners and beneficiaries:

- Small-scale farmer groups
- Women groups
- Youth groups
- Government departments at district level
- Farmers' cooperatives and agricultural training centres
- Local NGOs and CBOs

Key objectives of the programme and the cross-cutting themes

- Increase women's control and ownership of land as a productive asset
- Enhance the capacity of women small-scale farmers to sustainably produce, and increase the quality and quantity of food and cash crops, livestock and fisheries
- Increase the incomes of urban child/female headed households through enterprise development activities
- Improve the nutritional status of women and children

Gender and HIV&AIDS are the cross cutting themes and peoples right to food security have a major impact on food security and as such are integrated in the agricultural programmes.

Current programme activities

Focus of International Volunteer Placements

- Currently there are 13 volunteers supporting several partners in building capacity for food production, crop diversification, animal production, enterprise and marketing activities and setting up monitoring and financial systems for programmes.

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- Short Term Volunteers will be improving and putting in finance, organisational development and monitoring and evaluation systems and processes with partner organizations. They are also going to be involved in providing partners and the target groups with market assessment skills.

Support to national volunteering

- We are now in the process of developing ways of integrating National Volunteering into the programme. Volunteers and partners have been asked to think of ways in which NV can be used to enhance their work and activities.

Advocacy and Global Education

- VSO Zambia is working with Civil Society, NGOs and government institutions in promoting pro-poor land policies. Land in Zambia is an important production resource. The Zambia Land Alliance and line Ministries of Agricultural and Lands are among the partners we are working with, with the support of 3 volunteers. Activities undertaken include awareness creation, lobbying, advocacy and research.
- There are also mainstreaming activities in gender and HIV&AIDS

Partner exchange visits/study tours

- Exchanges through RAISA (VSO's Regional AIDS Initiative Southern Africa). In November 2006 there was a regional workshop and conference "From Vulnerability to Sustainability, Food security in a World of HIV&AIDS" in Pretoria. We are planning this year to host RAISA/Secure livelihoods partners from Mozambique in Zambia with our partners promoting organic farming and high value protein foods
- LINKS – there was a reproductive health study tour to Zimbabwe with partners from all the Zambia PO PAPs. The only other planned activity is the commonwealth professional fellowship for partners.

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

- Fundraising to support partner activities

Other partnership activities

- The Programme has developed close working relations with the local chiefs in working towards meeting our objective for women and children to have access to nutritious foods in the households. Under the EU funded Food Aid and Food Security Project, which is supported by 3 volunteers, activities such as Food Aid to support ART uptake are undertaken alongside food production activities.

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

The work that VSO Zambia is doing with other international NGOs and government, has been able to provide room to lobby local leaders on customary land issues, and raised awareness on land rights, gender and the how this links to food security and development.

Through the EU project, it gives great satisfaction to see that previously incapacitated persons are being productive again and their dignity restored through a multi-sectoral approach to development work. Lesson has been that some times pro-poor interventions need to take into consideration short term immediate needs such as food to support ART uptake and long-term food production with a combination of enterprise development activities.

Another aspect of the EU project are the positive outputs that the government through the Ministry of Health in Eastern province, Lundazi District wishes to learn from the project. The Ministry has seen the positive changes in people's lives due to compliance to ART as a result of the food aid and is thinking of scaling up activities in other districts. Production levels have been going up as well as increased enterprise development activities as people's health and well-being improves.

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With Zambian society being mainly patriarchal, there has been work done in promoting and supporting women involved in food production through affirmative action. These are done through having a deliberate policy to have a certain % as women in all activities. VSO volunteers have been working with small-scale farmers on extension and market development services and have facilitated the creation of new linkages and markets for local produce.

VSO Zambia is in tune with the main approaches that government is using in addressing food insecurity such as making food more accessible to the poor, diversification of food crops, improving marketing systems, paying attention to gender dimensions of food security, addressing food security issues for people living with HIV&AIDS as well as looking at favourable land policies.