

# HIV AND AIDS

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VSO works to improve the lives of people affected by HIV and AIDS.

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## INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

Worldwide, the response to HIV and AIDS is continually evolving. The 2010 deadline to ensure universal access to prevention, treatment, care and support is approaching and, while huge progress has been made, the target will not be met. The international community is therefore re-evaluating targets and responses.

Obstacles to achieving these goals include weak health systems and a shortage of health professionals, lack of financing to scale up activity and information systems that are simply inadequate to share learning and knowledge.

Donors such as the UK Department for International Development and The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria have committed funding to strengthen health systems to tackle the HIV and AIDS pandemic. This trend is likely to be reflected in the focus of VSO programmes over the coming years.

## OUR ACHIEVEMENTS IN HIV AND AIDS

VSO's corporate programme objectives offer direction to our country programmes as they develop strategies to address specific contexts and needs. This year, VSO's work in HIV and AIDS was driven by six objectives, outlined below, and a number of success indicators. The following provides a summary of a larger report and offers key examples of success rather than a complete picture.

Countries where VSO works in HIV and AIDS are Bangladesh, Cameroon, China, Ethiopia, India, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Vanuatu, Vietnam, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

### 1 WORK WITH GOVERNMENTS AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS TO IMPROVE THE CARE AND SUPPORT OFFERED TO GIRLS AND BOYS AFFECTED BY HIV AND AIDS

The majority of our programmes in Southern Africa focus on this objective and the most significant outcomes are improvements in services offered to children as a direct result of organisational development support. Our work with governments is also bringing changes in policy. For example, advocacy work in Nigeria resulted in government commitment to include HIV and AIDS education in the national curriculum.

- **Partners report an increase in the delivery and range of services offered to children.** In Zambia, an agricultural volunteer worked with a partner organisation that provides support and skills training to orphans and other vulnerable children. As a result, 417 children received basic training in land and seedbed preparation and cultivation, which will increase their opportunities to support themselves..

### 2 SUPPORT HIV AND AIDS ORGANISATIONS TO DELIVER PREVENTION, TREATMENT, CARE AND SUPPORT SERVICES TO WOMEN AND MEN AFFECTED BY HIV AND AIDS

The majority of our programmes work towards this objective and progress is reported from all of them. Partners from 14 countries cited improvements in organisational capacity and the quality and scale of services delivered to their clients, while a further nine had seen an increase in the number of people using their services.

- **More people can access and benefit from better information, treatment and care services.** In Cameroon, the Community Partnerships against AIDS Programme is an initiative to improve awareness-raising and care services in rural communities. VSO has offered support through international volunteers, small grants, training and international learning visits. As a result, services have expanded from one to 12 villages, over 100 national volunteers have been recruited and trained, and five communities are involved in income-generating activities.



### 3 ENSURE ORGANISATIONS, COALITIONS AND NETWORKS OF INDIVIDUALS CAN DELIVER SERVICES TO AND ADVOCATE FOR WOMEN AND MEN LIVING WITH HIV AND AIDS

Last year saw a growth in VSO support for fledgling organisations run by and for people living with HIV and AIDS. These organisations offer a range of services, including counselling, peer support and income-generation programmes. In the area of advocacy, VSO has supported partners to lobby government successfully for improved access to HIV services, and in three countries, VSO supported the establishment of national advocacy coalitions.

- **People living with HIV and AIDS report improved provision of services.** In China, an international volunteer and a national volunteer worked with Longchuan Youth Volunteer Association in Yunnan to host a workshop about the importance of peer support for people living with HIV and AIDS. As a result, two support groups were established, which have a membership of 120, and they have gone on to develop an income-development project that is funding the distribution of condoms, delivery of prevention messages and home visits to encourage those living with HIV to seek treatment.

### 4 ENSURE VSO PARTNER ORGANISATIONS ESTABLISH WORKPLACE POLICIES THAT BENEFIT MEN AND WOMEN AFFECTED BY HIV AND AIDS

Thirteen countries are currently pursuing work under this objective and progress is steady, with an initial focus on developing policies. The real impact of these policies will be evident as they are implemented over the coming year and partners seek greater involvement of people living with HIV and AIDS in the workplace.

- **Partners develop workplace policies and undertake staff training to implement the policies effectively.** VSO Ethiopia has trained all staff in an HIV and AIDS workplace policy, translated it into Amharic and shared it with partners and key institutions. This has led to major interest from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, which has requested VSO participation in a forum of government agencies to discuss the implications of workplace policies.

### 5 REDUCE THE BURDEN OF HIV AND AIDS CARE ON WOMEN AND GIRLS THROUGH NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVEL ADVOCACY

VSO has been working on this issue for two years and recently there have been extremely significant results, including a request from the Southern African Development Community to VSO to develop guidelines and policy recommendations to be used as a best practice model across the region.

- **Policy change is influenced at national and international level by VSO-led advocacy work.** VSO strongly influenced the UK Department for International Development to address specifically the needs of women and girls in its new HIV and AIDS strategy. This was achieved through a series of activities, including the publication of Walking the Talk, a report that explored the impact of HIV and AIDS on women, as well as consultation submissions, face-to-face meetings, coalition group activities and the Women Matter campaign.

### 6 ENSURE HIV PREVENTION POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES ARE PLANNED AND IMPLEMENTED IN AN EVIDENCE-BASED AND GENDER-SENSITIVE WAY

2007/08 was the first year of working on this objective, but VSO and its partners in six countries have already made important progress.

- **Networks, coalitions, and alliances formed around gender and HIV prevention are supported to influence policy change.** In Nepal, VSO supported the Blue Diamond Society to secure a landmark ruling on lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans-sexual and inter-sexual rights. The Supreme Court issued orders to the government to end discrimination and to ensure equal rights through the constitution.

#### FUTURE DIRECTION

VSO will continue to build on these corporate objectives to ensure improvements in the lives of those affected by HIV and AIDS. Specific areas for consideration include:

- find ways to work closely and collaboratively in health and HIV and AIDS to ensure health systems are offering people living with HIV and AIDS effective services
- develop advocacy around the greater involvement of men and boys in programmes to prevent HIV.