

Programme Area Summary

Country: Bangladesh

Programme Area Plan: Participation and Governance 2003-2008

What is the aim of the programme area?

To increase community participation and to ensure that people of all levels of society (particularly those affected by poverty and women) are heard at the policy level and able to provide input to decision-making processes.

Why is VSO working in that particular programme area and region?

VSO Bangladesh's governance program focuses on the South West and North West regions of the country. These counties are considered poverty prone due to a weak socio-economic condition. The local government in these areas is plagued by a lack of financial and human resources, direction and authority making them unable to help their own communities in any way. There is very little communication or networking amongst the local NGOs in these regions as well as a lack of strategic focus, management systems and skills at the organizational level to effectively carryout governance programs.

Key beneficiaries and partners:

- Rural communities
- Local government institutions
- Local and network NGOs
- Community based organizations
- International NGOs, especially Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) which has granted funding to VSO for SCORE (Strengthening Community Rights and Empowerment) Project in Bangladesh 2005-2008. Funding is through Canada Corps, an initiative that promotes innovative approaches to strengthening good governance practices in developing countries. VSO Canada is working in partnership with VSO Bangladesh and with VSO Bangladesh's 3 local NGO partners – Shushilan, SAP Bangladesh and Rupantar and 12 associated Community-Based Organizations (CBOs).

Key objectives of the programme and cross-cutting themes

1. Increase Union Parishads (UP)¹ members' capacity to manage basic service delivery in a more participatory, accountable and gender sensitive way.
2. Increase community empowerment to demand their rights

VSO Bangladesh facilitated both a Gender and HIV & AIDS mainstreaming process for all governance partners. The primary objective of this process is to make the governance partners, volunteers and staff aware and sensitised on issues of gender and HIV&AIDS and to ensure that gender and HIV&AIDS are incorporated in their programs, organizational policies and procedures.

Current programme activities

Focus of International Volunteering Placements

- Capacity building through volunteer placements is the core activity of VSO Bangladesh's governance strategy. Volunteers will be placed with rights based organizations in the area of advocacy, lobbying, networking, research, communication,

¹ Union Parishads (UPs) are such institutions at the grassroots level where people's participation in uplift activities is not at all encouraged.

Programme Area Summary

planning and management. The approach that is being used to most effectively enable this is the networking through clustering of placements.

- VSOB will place volunteers at local level development organizations which are directly working to build up the capacity of the local government in the area of development planning, budgeting, financial system, administration, management and raising awareness.
- VSOB will provide volunteers with technical skills and key competences to build capacity at following levels:
 - Individual level: Improving technical skills in budgeting, strategic planning, management, marketing, accounting, micro-enterprise, materials development and communication
 - Organizational level: Improving systems for financial management, general management, transparency and accountability, auditing planning and implementation of development activities
 - Institutional level: Strengthening advocacy and campaigning, coordination with local government and central government donors, NGOs/CBOs and community organizations, developing networks and partnerships, which enable rural communities to be effectively represented to local government, central government and donors.
- Youth Volunteers: VSOB Governance considers the input of YFD and NetCorps volunteers as very important for its program due to their skills, adaptability and program understanding. Presently, there is a youth volunteer working with a VSOB Governance partner to build their capacity in research and documentation. Youth will continue to play a key role in this program.
- Short Term placements: Short-term volunteers have contributed considerably in VSOB's Governance Program particularly through the SCORE Program. One STV developed a VSO SCORE website and the other STV supported in the research and documentation of the SCORE project. Two STVs this year will contribute to work in the media and with documentation.

Support to National Volunteering

- Currently there is one Governance Volunteer Development Volunteer placement that will be filled in 2007-2008 and research is being carried out to identify a broader scope of local stakeholders involved that would be a part of this programme. Research has already been gathered through workshops involving Governance partners. One Program Officer is involved in carrying out National Volunteering activities and there will be a wider incorporation of National Volunteering in the coming years.

Partner exchange visits/study tours

- Exposure visit (Philippines)
- Exchange visit (Sri Lanka and Bangladesh)

Workshops, training and conferences

- Governance Workshop
- National Workshop on "*Strengthening Local Government: Avenues for Cooperation and Partnership between National Institution of Local Government (NILG) and VSO Bangladesh & its Partners*".
- Skill Development (ICT and Special Training sessions on rights based approach, good governance, monitoring and evaluation, gender and development in Bangladesh)

Advocacy and Global Education

Programme Area Summary

- Development of Advocacy Group and creation of links with (10) local advisory groups to carry out advocacy activities at local and national level.
- Development of Strategic Focus Group

Other partnership activities:

- Continuous partnership mapping for volunteer placements
- Networking and alliance building with INGOs, government bodies and local NGOs

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

VSO's work in Bangladesh is unique as it supports and encourages the capacity building of local government institution (UPs) and it serves to educate partners, volunteers, community members and UP representatives on human rights. There will be long-term benefits and effects from the longstanding partnership with the National Institute of Local Government (NILG) including the strengthening of local government.