

**Country:** Cameroon

**Programme Area:** Education 2007-2012

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

The programme aims to increase equitable access to quality primary education, especially for girls in the Far North of Cameroon.

**Why is VSO working in this particular programme area and region?**

VSO Cameroon aims to achieve the same goals and objectives as the government in improving access to quality education while correcting regional and gender disparities. It is recognised officially that the Far North is the most disadvantaged province in Cameroon. In that region, the illiteracy rate for women, who are considered as the most disadvantaged group, is 72% (Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 2004). The school enrolment rate for girls aged between 6 and 14 years is 72.2% (81.3% for boys of the same age group) and less than 50% of girls at school going age are actually enrolled.

VSO Cameroon's education programme will tackle the issues of poor education management, and lack of trained and motivated teachers as well as key factors discouraging girls from going to school leading to a high illiteracy rate for women: socio-cultural prejudices, early marriages, sexual harassment, unwanted pregnancies and domestic violence against women.

**Key beneficiaries and partners**

The key beneficiaries of the programme are children and youth (girls in particular). VSO is working with the education communities. The key partners are as follows:

- Six school clusters (40 primary schools) in four of the most disadvantaged administrative Divisions
- Three Teacher Training Colleges and their application schools
- Six local Councils
- One Local NGO involved in the education sector
- One National Network involved in advocacy activities for Education For All.

**Key objectives of the programme and the cross-cutting themes**

- To improve the quality of classroom teaching and the learning environment for boys and girls in selected schools
- To improve inclusion (of women in particular) in education management at all levels through greater and more effective local participation and improved governance
- To increase access to schools, specifically for girls, through greater recognition of the benefits of education by parents and community leaders
- To improve the governance and strengthen the capacities of local organisations in Education for All advocacy efforts

While trying to achieve those objectives, VSO Cameroon aims to mainstream rights, gender, HIV & AIDS, IT and governance in the education sector.

**Current programme activities**

*Focus of International Volunteer Placements*

- This programme is starting with 16 international volunteers: 6 Canadian Youth will be assisting communities to design their participatory long term school development plans for at least 40 schools. 1 researcher expected in November 2007 to carry out the VT research for the advocacy activities for the improvement of teachers' conditions. 3 teacher trainers

## *Programme Area Summary*

at the Government Teacher Training Colleges to train teacher trainers on participatory approaches and other inclusive teaching methodologies and support the primary teaching curriculum review process. 5 in-service teacher trainers to work in some school clusters, and 1 organizational development Advisor to support our National volunteer implementing partner. There will be around 15 long term volunteers in country. Skills and roles needed to implement this programme are the following:

- Primary teacher trainers (especially primary English language teacher trainers).
- Community development workers who would support the communities to improve school governance and develop participatory school development plans.
- Management and Organisational development advisors to help education NGOs to design and implement their plans
- Fundraising advisors to support the education communities mobilize resources necessary for the implementation of their plans
- Volunteer management
- Education management
- HIV&AIDS interventions with youth
- Advocacy adviser
- IT and Database management
- Gender adviser with experience in gender mainstreaming
- Curriculum Development advisors
- Monitoring and evaluation advisors

### *Workshops, training & conferences*

- Self-assessment workshops to help partner schools design long term school development plans
- ICT and volunteer training on the Organisational and Institutional development process
- Volunteer conferences to discuss programme strategy, monitoring and evaluation
- Skill share workshop for volunteers and partners to share the best practices in participatory management.
- Skill share workshop every quarter in each school cluster on the New Pedagogic Approach (NPA) of the Ministry On Basic Education

### *Support to national volunteering*

- VSO Cameroon, with the support of CIDA (Canada), is trying to promote national volunteering in the education sector in order to help solve the crucial issue of teacher shortages at the primary level. At least 40 national volunteers are being recruited by a national organisation with the support of VSO. Those community volunteers will be placed in various schools as teacher or community animators to support the communities in the school development planning process.

### *Research*

- Stakeholder consultations were conducted in order to analyse and understand the deep causes of unequal access to basic education in the far North of Cameroon. Methodologies included individual consultations, focus group discussions, literature reviews and causal mapping workshops. These involved government representatives, international agencies, civil society organizations, local councils and VSO volunteers. Also, the Valuing Teachers research process is planned to start soon in order to support the advocacy activities of the Cameroon Education For All Network (CEFAN).

### *Advocacy and Global Education*

- VSO offers organisational capacity building support for a national network advocating for Education for All.

### *Programme Area Summary*

- There are plans to actively participate in the International Volunteer Day every year and in the Global Action Week (GAW) campaign

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

- There will be a study tour in the third year of the project to enable participants to learn more about community involvement in education management.

#### *Development of publications or other materials for training or communication*

- Here the main activity will be the teacher training curriculum review. Volunteers will also be developing and disseminating teacher-training material for their colleagues in various primary schools.

#### *Other partnership activities*

- Programme area review every year between 2008-2012
- Partnership reviews every year

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

The main feature of VSO Cameroon's work in the education sector is the improvement of school governance. In the past, the Government tried to create School Management Committees to achieve more community involvement in education. This has not worked so far mostly because of governance issues in school management. VSO takes a bottom-up approach of school development planning and this seems to better mobilise the entire education community for more participatory education management at local level. The other interesting feature is the involvement of local Councils who are responsible for Basic Education in their areas as stated in the framework law on decentralisation. It is expected that well governed schools supported by local decision makers will create an enabling environment where everyone, especially women, can participate in the decision making processes and provide more access to quality primary education to girls.