

## Programme Area Summary

**Country:** The Gambia

**Programme Area:** Disability 2005 - 2010

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

To improve the lives of people with disabilities, women and men, girls and boys, in rural and urban areas, through empowerment and improved services.

### **Why is VSO working in that particular Programme Area and region?**

The social support system in The Gambia is not well developed. For people with disabilities, there is no system of welfare or support and therefore most people with disabilities are reliant on support from within the family, with the result that a high proportion of them are homebound. There is currently little communication between the public service providers in The Gambia and the disabled community, resulting in a lack of understanding of the needs of people with disabilities.

Specific needs for VSO's work in Disability in The Gambia include:

- Disabled people seem to be marginalised in the development process, e.g. not mentioned in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP).
- There are few other international organisations working with the Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) in-country, and no organisation is supporting the sector as a whole.
- There is the potential to make a big impact, especially with the learning gathered around the world that VSO can apply to the work.
- Disabled People's Organisations have the potential to be committed partners.
- Given the lack of resources available to DPOs, it is only possible to address this programme area effectively as part of a funded project. The initial aim will therefore be to develop a project with the DPOs and get funding for it.

Research undertaken in July and August 2004, by volunteers from the DPO identified three clear levels of need within the disability sector in The Gambia:

- Access to services
- Participation and inclusion of people with disabilities
- Improving the legal and institutional framework.

### **Key beneficiaries and partners**

#### *Beneficiaries*

Through working with Disabled People's Organisations, the 6,600 members of the nine DPOs are direct beneficiaries of the programme. Of these, approximately 62% are male and 38% female. As DPOs become stronger, more visible, and expand their reach into more rural locations, it is expected that membership will increase by between 25% and 50%, resulting in a minimum number of 8,250 direct beneficiaries. Although the members of the DPOs have been identified as the main beneficiaries, this programme will ultimately have a direct or indirect benefit for all people with disabilities in The Gambia.

#### *Partners*

A Steering Committee of DPOs and VSO supervises the implementation of the DPO/VSO Programme. The Committee includes representatives of VSO and these organisations:

- GFD (Gambia Federation of the Disabled) - GFD is an umbrella organisation of DPOs
- GADHOH (Gambian Association of Deaf and Hard of Hearing)
- GAPD (Gambia Association of the Physically Disabled)
- GPDSA (Gambia Physically Disabled Sports Association)
- GOVI (Gambia Organisation of the Visually Impaired)

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- NUDY (National Union of Disabled Youths)
- RSOD (Rural Support of the Disabled)
- AMDG (Association of the Mentally Disabled in The Gambia)
- GOLD (Gambia Organisation for Learning Difficulties)

In addition, a representative of the Department of Social Welfare (DoSW) also plays an advisory role on the Committee.

Other Key Stakeholders/Partners include Department of State for Education (DoSE), Royal Victoria Teaching Hospital (RVTH), Special Schools, National Rehabilitation Centre (NRC)

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

There are four key objectives of this programme (pending external funding):

- To increase the access of people with disabilities in The Gambia to quality services, enabling them to fulfil their basic needs and rights.
- To enable people with disabilities to participate more actively in all aspects of family and community life in The Gambia.
- To develop a more inclusive and supportive environment for PWD in The Gambia, through the implementation of a National Disability Policy and the development of a strong, coordinated disability movement which can represent the rights of PWD.

### **Current programme activities**

#### *Focus of International Volunteer Placements*

- The project's DPO partners currently lack funds and organisational capacity to provide the services people with disabilities need. By bringing skilled VSO volunteers to support DPO staff to improve the effectiveness of their programmes, DPOs will develop their ability to function more effectively and efficiently.
- VSO volunteers will continue in placements with some of the more established DPOs to address their individual needs, specifically to support them to develop longer-term programme strategies and resource mobilisation plans. The disability programme will be supported by volunteers in the following roles:
- Paediatrician, management advisor, equipment engineer, Disability Unit advisor, Physiotherapist, Special Needs lecturer

#### *Workshops, training & conferences:*

- Capacity building of the 9 DPOs: Implemented via 5 organisational development workshops for all DPOs, 5 organisational development workshops for individual DPOs and day-to-day capacity building by volunteers with all DPOs.
- The VSO volunteers providing ongoing capacity-building will support the organisations to implement any changes they identify during the workshops, and to embed these changes in day-to-day practice and running of the DPOs.

#### *Advocacy and Global Education:*

- This aspect of the work has been waiting for a disability awareness volunteer and for funding to support it. However in the meantime, VSO has provided assistance for individual DPOs as they have used the media – especially GOVI, NUDY, GADHOH and GAPD. VSO has also supported in terms of finance and volunteer time the organisation of the 2005 and 2006 World Disability Day events, which GFD has traditionally led

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

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- Following the validation and launch of the research planned as part of VSO's disability programmes future activities, is the development and production of a Disability Awareness Guide for use in outreach activities, and leaflets and posters for a national publicity campaign.

#### *Other partnership activities:*

- Key institutions have participated in Steering Committee meetings – AATG, EU, SDF, CU, RVTH, ProPAG
- The request from the Department of Social Welfare has led to the involvement of DPOs in drafting a National Disability bill, a first for The Gambia.

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

VSO is becoming recognised by other stakeholders in Gambian development as the key organisation supporting the disability sector.

VSO The Gambia's work in disability has the stability of an established steering committee and strengthened relationships between the partners. If we had had a large funding input into a low resourced, uncoordinated sector too early, it could have potentially caused major instability.