

Programme Area Summary

Country: Ghana

Programme Area: Education 2005-2009

What is the aim of the programme area?

The programme is focused in the Upper East, Upper West and Northern Regions and aims at improving the quality of education.

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

The three northern regions (Upper East, Upper West and Northern) are the poorest in the country. In these regions, 28.5% of adults are illiterate, whilst less than 9% of school children reaching primary class six can barely read with understanding. Statistics and comparative analysis also reveal that a large percentage of people above six years have never been to school and the average is even higher for females. In many of the communities there are no schools and the average daily distance walked by a pupil to attend junior secondary school is 8 kilometres. The problem is exacerbated by lack of teachers with some of the districts teacher: pupil ratio being 1:80 compared to the national ratio of 1:40. To address these, government introduced the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education policy in 1994 to improve access and quality of education at the basic level. The Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS) for 2000-2015 also gives priority to quality education as a key strategy for achieving development.

Key beneficiaries and partners

Key beneficiaries include primary and secondary school children, teachers, head teachers, school inspectors, staff of GES District Offices and community members. The key partners are the Ghana Education Service of the Ministry of Education, local NGO's and Civil Society Organizations. We collaborate with CRS, Link Community Development, UNICEF, Action Aid and District Assemblies, who are also seen as partners in improving teaching and learning.

Key objectives of the programme and the cross-cutting themes

Objectives

- Support Ghana Education Service (GES) staff and head teachers to develop and implement more effective planning and monitoring systems at circuit, district and regional levels of the education system.
- Improve the teaching of literacy, numeracy and science education in schools in the focus regions
- Encourage community involvement in the development of schools and advocacy for the delivery of better educational services in the focus regions.
- Mainstream gender and HIV/AIDS issues into all education activities at district and regional levels

Cross-cutting themes

- Carry out gender education for boys and girls in schools.
- Promote HIV & AIDS awareness in schools through clubs and peer education.
- Training and support to local teachers to recognize and mainstream gender issues in their teaching role.
- Links also exist with the disability programme in supporting inclusive education.
- Restricted livelihood has a direct impact on access to education. An analysis of education problems revealed that irregular incomes of parents are a hindrance to sending their wards to school. There is therefore the need to

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address the issue of livelihoods of parents for a positive response towards education. For instance, in the Bongo District in the Upper East, the livelihoods programme is supporting women's groups to enhance their incomes and ability to support their children in school. There is therefore the opportunity for the livelihood and education programmes to work hand in hand to share skills, create awareness and prioritise education issues. By doing this the livelihood programme will help address some of the problems of education.

Current programme activities

Focus of International Volunteer Placements

- Working with Circuit Supervisors (CS) and District Teacher Support Teams (DTST) to provide professional development support to over 600 primary school Teachers in eight Districts in the Upper-East and Upper-West Regions.
- Working in District Education Offices (DEO) providing support for data analysis, planning, monitoring and review.
- Strengthen fundraising and management systems of local NGOs and Civil Society Organisations that empower local communities to advocate for better delivery of education service.
- Working with Ghanaian Teachers in Secondary schools to promote positive and responsible student behaviour when it comes to reproductive health issues including HIV and AIDS.
- Providing guidance and technical support to a local partner to run a volunteering programme recruiting Ghanaians to teach in VSO focus regions.

Workshops, training & conferences

- Annual, bi-monthly workshops with partners and stakeholder to review and plan for the programme
- Volunteer quarterly team meetings at district, regional and national level to enable volunteers share and provide support to each

Support to national volunteering

- Work with national organizations and NGOs to promote national volunteering through provision of guidance and technical support

Research

- Planned research on reasons for low gender parity ratio in education in the three northern regions despite consistent interventions to deal with the issue. This is to enable us redefine our gender strategy

Advocacy and Global Education

- Supporting an education coalition in Ghana to undertake the Valuing Teachers research. This serves as the basis for advocating for increased involvement of teachers in policy decision-making.

Partner exchange visits/study tours

- Study tour For Headmasters, peripatetic officers and resource teachers working with children with disabilities to visit UK schools to learn more about, and understand, the concept of inclusive education, which is still a new concept in Ghana
- District Education Officers Study Tour
- Purpose: To give district education officers and associated staff in Ghana, the opportunity to observe effective district level support for education, to help them develop appropriate systems and practice in Ghana
- Head Teacher Work Shadowing Placements

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- Purpose: To give successful Head teachers the chance to develop further skills to the support and implementation of new methodology and develop capacity both within their schools, and more widely through sharing learning with other schools in their region.

Other partnership activities

- Network and strengthen the capacity of coalitions engaged in advocacy for education at the regional and national levels. Feed our learning from grassroots into national level activity of government.

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

VSO has pioneered national volunteering programme by providing guidance and technical support to a government department to recruit and place over 6,000 national volunteers in Ghana.

VSO is the only organization in Ghana that has volunteers based in District Education Offices and providing follow up support to teachers and education management staff