

Secure livelihoods

EXTERNAL BACKGROUND

The impact of the global financial and economic crisis continues to be experienced most severely by poor people in developing countries. The number of hungry people around the world continues to rise, reflecting in an increase of the proportion of population that are under-nourished. This is largely due to lack of access to food because of high prices, lower incomes and more unemployment¹. In response, attention is turning to the questions of how to feed a growing world population and what support is needed for agricultural development and technology to adapt to the twin challenge of climate change and population growth.

International response to climate change suffered a setback after the Copenhagen summit² in December 2009 failed to meet its remit of a formal agreement on post 2012 emissions reductions targets. However, the Copenhagen accord does represent progress – it is an agreement between 192 countries (more than Kyoto) to participate in climate change responses and actions, which recognises the need to address deforestation as a source of greenhouse gas emissions and has defined substantial financial support to climate change actions.

INTERNAL BACKGROUND

During the year, Bangladesh opened its new secure livelihoods programme, bringing the total number of programmes during 2009/10 to 21 (19 country programmes and two regional programmes in Latin America). VSO Philippines closed, bringing to an end its innovative and successful secure livelihoods programme, although VSO Bahaginan are investigating options to continue supporting this area of work in the Philippines in other ways.

VSO has gone through a strategic review, with one of its outcomes being an increased focus on climate change. At country level, there is also growing awareness and recognition of climate change as a priority: 12 secure livelihoods programmes reported to have engaged in climate change related work or planning activities for the coming year.

The Accenture-funded market development training project has enabled a wider rollout of market development approaches within our secure livelihoods programmes and stimulated further engagement in the issues raised. There is now a wider appreciation amongst staff, partners and volunteers of the relevance to their own country context and 18 secure livelihoods programmes are now engaging in work to support poor people to gain access to market chains.

PROGRESS TOWARDS CORPORATE PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES

1) Improved food and income security for poor and marginalised women, men and young people through sustainable natural resource management.

VSO's work with approximately 161 partner organisations in 18 programmes has contributed to the progress made towards this objective. In countries where work on food security and sustainable natural resource management is well established, such as Cambodia, Malawi, Mozambique and

¹ FAO State of Food Insecurity in the World 2009

² 2009 United Nations Climate Change Conference held in Copenhagen, also known as the Copenhagen summit



Zambia, progress has been good. Achievements have been limited in other programmes where work is still under development. Crucial planning and preparation work to support future activities has been put in place in Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) regional programme, Laos and Kenya.

A substantial element of work contributing this objective has been on strengthening internal organisational capacity of partner organisations. This is now becoming more systematic, with the introduction of improved tools for assessing partner capacity development requirements within VSO. In three CPPA³ supported programmes – Ghana, Nigeria and Tanzania – short-term volunteers have supported its development and have been applied with a total of 12 partners during the year. The focus on internal organisational development is complemented by work in all programmes contributing to this objective to support partners to improve the quality of services provided in relation to food and income security and sustainable natural resource management.

For example, in northern Ghana, the Ministry of Food and Agriculture increased access to agricultural training and advice for 6,000 community members –mainly female– which will improve their food and income security. This was achieved through the support of a VSO volunteer who facilitated the recruitment and training of 75 women volunteers to provide much-needed extension advice.

In four programmes - Cambodia, LAC PEMNR⁴, Namibia and the Philippines - VSO has enabled partners to provide better support to their communities by developing alternative livelihoods options, when the existing ones are no longer viable or are environmentally unsustainable. For example in the Philippines, in an area where fish stocks are declining due to over fishing, a short-term volunteer carried out a market assessment on seaweed production, which has helped a local NGO support local fishermen to get involved in seaweed farming as an alternative to fishing.

Increased attention is now being paid to enable partners to support poor and marginalised women, men and young people to participate in the development of their activities. For example, in 30 communities involved in the Cadbury Cocoa Partnership project in Ghana, organisational development volunteers supported communities to develop action plans in collaboration with the Ministry of Food and Agriculture and the Department of Community Development. As a result, community members now feel more able to voice their concerns with local government and 11 communities have successfully advocated for the installation of wells to provide access to drinking water.

In six programmes, VSO has supported partners to address specific issues for marginalised groups to improve food and income security through sustainable natural resource management. For example, in Bolivia, volunteers in the LAC Social and Economic Inclusion of Youth programme have helped to nurture a relationship between the Chiquitano Forest Conservation Foundation and the Company Work Foundation to foster job opportunities for young people in natural resource management activities.

2) Increased access to and participation in market chains for poor and marginalised women, men and young people.

An estimated 138 partners in 18 programmes are supporting poor people to gain greater access to and participation in market chains. This is a significant increase for the second successive year. As with the previous objective, countries such as Guyana, Kenya Malawi and Tanzania that have been working in this area for a period of time, made good progress. However, results are still at an early stage for countries (Indonesia and Nigeria) that are newly engaging in this area.

The Accenture 'Making Markets Work' project supports work under this objective, mainly in the three existing regional learning centres in Tanzania, Malawi and Cambodia and two new learning centres currently under development in Nigeria and Guyana.

The majority of VSO's work under this objective (17 programmes), focuses on improving partners' capacity to provide or facilitate access to quality services, enabling poor people to access markets.

³ CPPA: Canadian Partnership Programme Agreement

⁴ Latin American and Caribbean Regional Programme – Protecting Environments: Managing Natural Resources

This includes support to strengthening the internal organisational functions of partner organisations as well as their ability to deliver specific services. For example in Tanzania, through support from a short-term volunteer marketing adviser and a long-term volunteer agribusiness adviser, 250 coffee farmers involved in the Kolcafe project have received credit to purchase equipment and organic inputs and have access to relevant agronomic advice to increase yields. The project design won an award from the UN SEED Initiative for action on sustainable development and a green economy.

VSO staff, partners and volunteers in nine countries now have improved skills to carry out market research and identify barriers and opportunities for poor people that affect their participation in markets. A workshop manual *Market Development: a workshop approach* was developed after a series of three pilot training events on market development involving 50 staff, partners and volunteers in Cambodia, Malawi and Tanzania.. The manual provides a resource for partners, staff and volunteers to gain a greater understanding of markets, how they work and their relevance to poor people's livelihoods. Five market assessments were also carried out during the year – Mongolia (textiles), Philippines (seaweed), Nigeria (catfish, groundnuts and maize). These are now forming the basis of planning for VSO's future involvement in support to the development of opportunities for poor people in these markets.

In Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania and Mongolia, VSO has set up links and increased co-operation between producers and other market actors, including government. In Malawi, commitment of private sector dairy processors, milk producers associations, NGOs and research organisations to collaborative action on smallholder dairy development was strengthened by national level stakeholder workshop for key players in smallholder dairy development, hosted by VSO.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT WORK IN THE GOAL

Inclusion – Consistent effort continues to be made to support partners to develop inclusive practices and develop specific initiatives that support the greater involvement of poor and marginalised groups. Ghana, Tanzania, Kenya and Zambia in particular continue to demonstrate good practice around gender, supporting gender mainstreaming with the majority of partners. In Tanzania, Mongolia, Nigeria and Namibia specific initiatives were developed to support development of livelihoods opportunities for people with disabilities with selected partners.

In Zambia and Mozambique, VSO has supported partners to raise awareness of the relationship between HIV and AIDS and nutrition in affected communities and to support agricultural techniques to improve production. Five countries participated in pilot initiatives on inclusive approaches to livelihoods and assessed barriers to participation in markets for vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities, people living with HIV and AIDS. As a result, in Tanzania, VSO volunteers helped establish a ground-breaking fish processing project which demonstrated the ability of people with disabilities to participate in successful economic activity, changing local perceptions.

Global Xchange (GX) – four GX teams going to Malawi, Syria, Tanzania and Zambia chose themes related to the secure livelihoods goal – such as 'climate change and food security' and 'supporting young people into sustainable livelihoods'.

Diaspora volunteering – 172 volunteers (average placement length 22 days) provided support to 1,359 beneficiaries in secure livelihoods related projects through four partners based in Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya and India. In Kenya, our diaspora volunteering partner established a relationship with the Lake Basin Development Authority in Kisumu to provide support to food security through improved fish production. A diaspora volunteer facilitated training to extension workers, enabling fish farmers to improve their technical skills and increase fish production.

National volunteering –national volunteering within the secure livelihoods goal continues to grow with 13 programmes (increased from nine last year) now engaged in or exploring possibilities for developing national volunteering initiatives. In Mozambique, national volunteers are crucial to responding to the challenges of HIV and AIDS and food security. Community based volunteers provide

support to people living with HIV and AIDS on agricultural techniques, to form savings and loans groups, as well as on home based care and health issues.

RECRUITMENT

Secure livelihood programmes recruited a total of 178 long-term and 73 short-term volunteers. These figures are in line with the year's performance but fell a little short of the corporate targets set. There were fewer placement documents submitted than expected, particularly Youth for Development (YfD) placements. Only two YfD volunteers started placements in 2009-10.

Overall, there continues to be a wide range of volunteer skills needed for secure livelihoods work, although most demand is concentrated upon business and management skills - a broad area where volunteer supply is usually healthy. Several programmes requested agriculture and agribusiness volunteers, being difficult to meet demand in these areas. Skills requirements for some strategic placements - often part of funded projects - are often very specific.

FUNDING

Three major new grants were secured for secure livelihoods work this year:

- from the EU for Guyana (€384,000),
- from Gorta for Malawi (€175,000 for 2009/10 and €295,000 for 2010/11)
- from Cadbury Cocoa Partnership for Ghana (£ 350,000).

A five-year \$3million grant from Accenture Foundation for the 'Making Markets Work' project started implementation this financial year. The project will continue and build on previous activities funded by Accenture to introduce market development approaches. The grant will support three existing regional learning centres (Cambodia, Malawi, Tanzania) as well as two new learning centres (Guyana, Nigeria), focusing on capacity development of partners, knowledge management and impact assessment.

LEARNING

Knowledge-sharing activities have been highly motivating and have facilitated the adoption of new approaches and ideas, enabling partners and volunteers to be more effective in reaching their objectives. Opportunities for networking and collaboration have also contributed to the development of clear areas of focus for joint working – such as in LAC where members of the Ibero American Model Forest Network, supported by CUSO-VSO, are developing joint approaches to working with the private sector.

Working with government – whilst there have been good experiences of working with government, it still remains a challenge to engage effectively with government departments. This is due to the lack of resources and staff turnover in most government ministries supporting rural development. Where funding is available, levels of engagement are usually improved - for example, in Malawi, VSO was instrumental in encouraging government departments for agriculture and irrigation to work more closely together to provide training to farmers under the Gorta funded project.

Reaching the poorest and marginalised groups – Learning from Nigeria and Cambodia has shown that it is important to be clear about our aims in this respect in order to be able to measure results and the need to work with our partners from the outset to identify target groups that we are seeking to benefit.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Climate change – a working group was established to pool expertise and knowledge from VSO's work on climate change. CUSO-VSO funding has also been secured for the appointment of a Climate

Change Adviser to develop recommendations for VSO's future involvement in climate change, supported by the working group. Although adapting to climate change is a significant issue affecting poor people's livelihoods, climate change will be addressed within VSO from a holistic perspective to assess implications on other aspects of development such as health, education and governance, as well as livelihoods.

Impact assessment – under the 'Making Markets Work' project, an action-learning pilot will be implemented to gather baseline data information in five learning centres.

KEY STATISTICAL INFORMATION 2009-10

Goal Area	No of Programmes	Volunteers (%) ⁵	Partners ⁶	Total Expenditure (£m)	Unrestricted Expenditure (£m)	Restricted Expenditure (£m)
Education	17	26.2	352	11.358	7.773	3.585
HIV and AIDS	17	16.3	198	8.420	5.035	3.385
Disability	12	9.6	120	4.084	2.662	1.422
Health	9	13.1	142	5.136	3.649	1.487
Secure Livelihoods	21⁷	19.8	268	8.368	5.418	2.950
Participation & Governance	16	15	191	7.240	4.841	2.399

⁵ In total about 1,520 volunteers were working with partner organisations on long-term or short-term placements at any point during the year. The percentage for each goal only measures volunteers assigned to a particular goal. It does not capture volunteers who support work in more than one goal eg volunteers working in HIV and AIDS who also support health work.

⁶ This is an estimate to reflect the number of work during the course of the year

⁷ Includes two regional programmes in LAC – Protecting Environments: Managing Natural Resources (PEMNR) and Social and Economic Inclusion of Youth – working in a total of six countries in the region in addition to Guyana.