

Programme Area Summary

Country: Uganda

Programme Area: Health and Social Well-being 2007-2012

What is the aim of the programme area?

To help improve the district-level planning, management and provision of quality clinical and primary healthcare services and support training institutions for medical students and nurses.

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

The poor and disadvantaged in Uganda continue to be badly affected by preventable diseases while the quality of health service provision continues to be poor. There are also many challenges relating to retention of health staff.

The public are not mobilised or motivated to demand quality health services from both the public and private sector. VSO is supporting the Uganda Health Sector Strategic Plan (HSSP) which aims to improve health systems following the decentralisation of health delivery to District level. HSSP has a strong focus towards working with communities and implementation of primary health care services, particularly in rural areas where access to health care is a major issue.

Key beneficiaries and partners

Beneficiaries:

- The population of districts where VSO Uganda works
- Health Professionals who will be supported and trained by VSO volunteers
- District Health Management
- People living with HIV & AIDS
- People potentially affected by communicable diseases

Partners:

- Health Services in Districts and health Sub Districts where VSO is currently working
- Health Training institutions
- Private Sector: International Medical Group, Case Medical Centre
- Not for Profit Sector: Hope Clinic Lukuli, Reachout Mbuya, Comboni Hospital, Bwindi Community Health Centre
- Health consumer organisations: Health Action Group, Coalition for Health Promotion and Social Development (HEPS)

Key objectives of the programme and cross-cutting themes

- Support the Health Sector to provide quality and accessible health services with an emphasis on reproductive health and communicable disease control (in particular Malaria and HIV & AIDS).
- Increase the number of trained health personnel working within the health sector by 10% by supporting training institutions.
- Increased demand for better health services within the general population through the support of health rights organisations with an emphasis on women and child rights.

HIV & AIDS and Gender are cross cutting themes:

- Despite reductions in HIV & AIDS prevalence (from 30% in 1986 down to 6% in 2004), prevalence is now increasing again and is seen to be disproportionately affecting women. Numbers of people affected by HIV & AIDS have overwhelmed health systems and structures which are themselves losing slow-to-replace health professionals to HIV & AIDS. The cost of treatment and support has shot up and the country is reliant on donors.

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- Despite the current government implementing a gender equality policy, in general the status of women in Uganda remains low. Female children are more likely to drop out of school at a young age, 43% of pregnant women are teenagers and maternal mortality rates have not improved in the last 10 years. Women are also very dependent on men to pay for health services making the services less accessible to them particularly emergency reproductive services.

Current programme activities

Focus of International Volunteer Placements

- Currently, volunteer placements focus primarily on provision of health services. Doctors are required to support District health services, Mission Hospitals and Not for Profit organisations. The focus of placements is on running out-patient departments, treating in-patients and supporting treatment of chronically ill patients, especially those with HIV & AIDS. There is an emphasis on linkages between the community and the health units with health managers taking an active role. This will require volunteers who have skills in primary care and community-based health services.
- With the implementation of the new Health programme, placements will be developed for doctors and nurses to work in primary health care, building the skills of health workers. There will also be placements for volunteers with public health and health management/administration skills and experience in Health Management Information Systems to support the management of health services at District level. Volunteers will also be requested to support and develop the skills and status of health workers in community and village health care programmes, working with Health Sub-Districts and NGOs.
- There are also a number of placements in Health Training Institutions including two Doctors based at Mbarara University and a Nurse Tutor at International Medical Group teaching their nurse training course. More placements will be developed for volunteers to train health professionals in Universities and nurse training schools and potentially laboratory training schools.
- Placements will be developed for volunteers to support VSO Uganda's partners in developing and implementing health rights advocacy strategies.
- YfD volunteers will be used to work with community based health volunteers.

Other programme activities and strategies:

- These will be developed once implementation of the re-developed programme commences

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

VSO has been working in health care in Uganda for many years and has an established presence in the country. The creation of a dedicated Health programme area in Uganda means that the work will be more focused towards specific objectives in partnership with the Health Sector Strategic Plan. This HSSP is focused on poor people through primary health care and prevention which are areas in which VSO has much expertise and experience within other health programmes. VSO is also incorporating a rights-based approach to health services which is seen as an essential part of a health strategy. VSO has a partnership with the NHS in Scotland (where volunteers are required to work in health and HIV & AIDS programmes in Sub Saharan Africa) and is exploring a partnership with NHS England which should support the expansion of the Uganda Health programme.