

Programme Area Summary

Country: Nigeria

Programme Area: Education 2005-2009

What is the aim of the programme area?

To strengthen the capacity of public education institutions to improve the quality, relevance and accessibility of early childhood and basic education provision in 16 states of Nigeria.

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

Nigeria is one of the poorest countries in the world with an estimated 150 million people (2006 Population Census). Almost half the population is living on less than one dollar a day. In 2006 it was ranked 159th out of 177 countries in the Human Development Index (which measures life expectancy and literacy rates, in addition to GDP per capita). Three decades of military rules resulted in severe under-investment in the education system, and less than 60% of children regularly attend school. The lack of trained teachers means that the student: teacher ratio is 1:78, though the ratio of students to untrained teachers is 1:48. There are vast gender disparities in terms of access to education, with an estimated 2 million fewer girls than boys enrolled in primary schools.

Key beneficiaries and partners

The immediate beneficiaries are the staff and the colleges of education and state education board, the teachers who benefit from the training initiatives. Ultimately the students will benefit by receiving good quality basic education.

Key partners are:

- State Universal Basic Education boards (responsible for all primary schools within the state, and for overseeing in-service teacher training) in Kano, Adamawa
- Civil Society Action Coalition on Education for All
- The Open Doors Centre for special learners
- Federal Colleges of Education (responsible for pre-service teacher training) in Pankshin, Akwanga
- The National Commission for Colleges of Education

Key objectives of the programme and the cross-cutting themes

- To strengthen the teaching and organisational capacity of government institutions involved in primary education
- To support implementation and upgrading of the qualification standards for pre-service primary education teachers
- To build the capacity of civil society organisations through Civil Society Action Coalition on Education for All to contribute more effectively to inclusive and relevant early childhood and basic education

HIV and AIDS and Gender are cross-cutting themes in all placements.

Current programme activities

Focus of International Volunteer Placements

Primary teacher training, both pre-service and in-service teacher training, IT and advocacy.

Lack of reliable IT systems is a real challenge for many colleges of education, as is accurate data collection which presents difficulties in planning, so VSO Nigeria places volunteers with a range of skills to enable its partners to strengthen primary education.

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Workshops, Training and Conferences

There was a VSO Nigeria programme area review in 2006. Another was done in February 2007. Skills share workshops in setting up and running virtual libraries were held for volunteers.

Support to National Volunteering

The Education Programme is working closely with National Volunteering and has almost concluded arrangements to work with Universal basic Education Commission and Agency for Non-Formal Education to build a National Volunteer management structure that will be sustainable.

Research

The Valuing Teachers Research Advocacy is currently on course and the report is being compiled. Helen Sherry is leading. The programme is also exploring other possible areas of research in the year 2007.

Advocacy and Global Education

VSO Nigeria participation in Global Education is planned for 2007.

Partner Exchange Visits/Study Tours

Three partners are going on Commonwealth Scholarship study in September –December 2007.

Providing Grants and/or Equipment for Partners, eg. small grants fund

Community Education Resource Centre set up in Minna, Niger State through a Volunteer who received FCO grant. The CERC plans to scale up the service to other places around the catchment area.

Development of publications or other materials for training or communication

Interactive CDs for Hausa language have been developed by volunteer Dave Stubbs at the COE in Akwanga, Nasarawa State. Other interactive CDs in English have been developed too, and it is hoped that this work can be scaled up over the next year.

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

VSO has been working in Nigeria for almost half a century and has come to be trusted and relied upon in the provision of skills in education. VSO's education programme is strongly linked to the government's Universal Basic Education campaign, and VSO is in a unique position to help support its implementation through working at all levels of the education system. Now that the government is calling on more community participation in management of education at all levels, VSO will work with grassroot organisations and help build management capacity of organisations that will ensure that the government maintain its commitment to 'Education for all,' whilst simultaneously working at the national and state levels to support teacher training and organisational capacity.