

Programme Area Summary

Country: Vanuatu

Programme Area: Participation and Governance 2004 - 2009

What is the aim of the programme area?

VSO Vanuatu aims to strengthen governance so that all people in Vanuatu, particularly the marginalised and disadvantaged, fully participate in and benefit from economic, social and political development. VSO Vanuatu is committed to working with both government and civil society to achieve this aim, and recognises that the equitable participation of both women and men is essential.

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

Vanuatu has a strong traditional resource base that allows the majority of people to pursue subsistence lifestyles with reasonable food security, adequate habitat security and a significant degree of social cohesion (albeit with little sense of national identity). However, there is substantial pressure on Vanuatu to engage more completely with the global community – in particular to increase national income to provide more effective social service delivery, especially for those in rural areas. Vanuatu is therefore in the process of making a difficult transition from self-sufficiency and a 'custom-governed' society to a small nation state. There is a strong consensus that effective participation and good governance are central to this process to ensure that Vanuatu retains its unique identity, while delivering appropriate and equitable development for all of its people.

VSO works with civil society organisations and government to both strengthen people's voice in decision-making processes, as well as to support the development of responsive and accountable organisations and institutions. VSO Vanuatu is also committed to strengthening the legal frameworks and advocating for rights-based approaches that can facilitate people's ability to demand good governance and encourage organisations to recognise internationally accepted rights. The programme recognises the centrality of gender equity within participation and governance issues as well as the potential social, political and economic impact of HIV and AIDS. VSO Vanuatu is therefore committed to mainstreaming these issues, raising awareness around them, and actively ensuring that there are strong linkages to gender and HIV and AIDS within its Participation and Governance programme.

Key beneficiaries and partners:

National Level Partners

- Foundation for Peoples of the South Pacific Vanuatu (FSPV)
- Vanuatu Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (VANGO)
- Department of Foreign Affairs (DoFA)
- Media Association of Vanuatu (MAV)
- University of the South Pacific Community Legal Centre
- Department of Provincial Affairs – National REDI Unit
- Department of Provincial Affairs - Finance Unit
- Department of Public Works

Provincial Level Partners

- Provincial Government Councils – Torba; Penama; Sanma; Malampa; Shefa, Tafea
- Malampa Public Works Division
- Tafea Public Works Division

Programme Area Summary

- Provincial Level NGOs (through EU NSA Project with VANGO)

Key objectives of the programme and the cross-cutting themes?

- Through partners, support people's capacity to demand good governance from state and civil society and effectively participate in decision making processes.
- Promote and support good governance among state and civil society to ensure that they are responsive to community needs and deliver equitable and sustainable development.
- Promote gender equity and awareness with a focus on increasing women's involvement and participation in the development process; and to increase awareness, understanding and capacity of partners and others to address HIV and AIDS and inter-related gender issues.

Current programme activities

Focus of International Volunteer Placements:

- Provide capacity building support and skills development for staff within local NGOs and CBOs that are geared towards mobilising communities in the identification and implementation of community development initiatives
- Strengthen rights-based legal frameworks, raise awareness on people's basic rights and facilitate access to legal services so that people can access their rights
- Provide capacity building support to state and civil society organisations to strengthen their governance processes and thereby improve their transparency, accountability and responsiveness to community needs
- Work with women's organisations, local NGOs and CBOs and other stakeholders to develop a toolkit of strategies that can be used by volunteers and partners to include women in the development process
- Work closely with key stakeholders to identify practical means in which volunteers can promote HIV and AIDS awareness and prevention and liaise with and learn from others in developing the VSO Vanuatu HIV and AIDS mainstreaming initiative

In addition to Long Term Volunteer Placements in the above areas, VSO Vanuatu also uses short-term volunteering to add value to its programme and it should have around 3 short term placements over the coming year. A Youth for Development volunteer will also take up a one year position with the Community Legal Centre in the next year.

Partner exchange visits/study tours

- LINKS Exchanges / Study Tours
- Facilitate exchanges, sharing of learning and the dissemination of best practice to strengthen the understanding and practice of good governance

Support to national volunteering

- Support for National Volunteering through VANGO

Advocacy/Global Education

- Support advocacy initiatives and partnership linkages in order to establish and strengthen a collective 'voice' in policy discussions and decision-making at national, provincial and community levels
- Support and advocate for the decentralisation of government processes and decision making functions to increase opportunities for effective participation and the delivery of effective services that meet community needs

Programme Area Summary

- Carry out gender awareness and training programmes for VSO Vanuatu staff, volunteers and identified partners to mainstream gender across the participation and governance programme

Other partnership activities

- Organisational Assessments of Partner Organisations
- Strategic Planning Workshops with partners

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

VSO has a distinctive competence and considerable experience supporting both effective participation and good governance in Vanuatu.

VSO Vanuatu is recognised as a development agency that works through volunteers as opposed to simply being a volunteer sending agency and there is a growing appreciation amongst stakeholders of the mutual benefits that stem from working programmatically and in partnership based on shared values and achieving common goals. However, with a number of volunteer sending agencies also working in Vanuatu (and the small population) this can also prove challenging where organisations just want 'an extra pair of hands' to assist them in achieving their objectives.

VSO is the leading organisation in Vanuatu providing support to provincial level organisations and it is recognised as having an excellent understanding of the issues that affect provincial level governance.