



WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP TO ADDRESS GENDER INEQUALITY IN EDUCATION

Lessons from VSO Ghana and VSO Ethiopia

Authors

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Abstract

This paper shares VSO's experience and learning from working in partnership with key stakeholders in supporting increased gender equality in education through a variety of interventions including volunteering, capacity building, training, sharing and learning, research and advocacy, and small grants; using specific examples from its' work in Ghana and Ethiopia.¹

The paper illustrates how VSO has adopted a holistic approach for gendered education programming, with opportunities for sharing learning and influencing policy and practice horizontally at local levels across schools, communities and districts and vertically within the different education systems. This work to support improved gender equality in education has evolved and strengthened over the last two years, as a result of both countries' involvement in formulating a baseline for our DFID and CIDA² reporting, on the quality of education experienced by girls.

The authors explain how the key issues raised through focus group discussions with girls, boys, parents, teachers, head teachers, teacher training institutions and local government education authorities, during the baseline survey helped validate VSO's four strategic overlapping areas of intervention in the education sector; teaching and learning, community engagement, education management and advocacy.

¹ VSO has a long history of working in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) at different levels of the Education system, from influencing policy at national level to addressing barriers to quality at school and community level in both Ethiopia and Ghana

² DFID (Department for International Development) and CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency)

Background

The participants of this study were the primary stakeholders of VSO's Education programme i.e. girls, boys, teachers, parents, head teachers, government education authorities and teacher trainers. The baseline data on the quality of education experienced by girls was collected two years ago and new data has been collected over the last three months in order to capture changes and outcomes of the programmes. The participants for both baseline and evaluation studies were selected in an inclusive manner so that they represent the views of all stakeholders.

The primary data for this paper was collected by using qualitative research methods; focus group discussions, classroom observations, case studies, guided self-assessment workshops with partner organisations and in-depth interviews with the primary stakeholders; from VSO Ghana and Ethiopia over the last two years.

In addition we have captured learning from our internal partnership processes, working collaboratively with our Education partners over the last three months to review progress towards addressing some of the barriers to quality education for girls. Secondary data has been collected from VSO volunteer reports, publications of the Ministries of Education and other external publications.

Attempts were made to ensure that voices of girls and women were heard. Separate focus groups were held with girls out of school, female pupils, and female teachers. Female members of the school management committees and parent teacher associations were also encouraged to participate.

VSO and Gender Equality in Education

Gender equality means girls and women having the same rights and opportunities in life as boys and men. Even though gender equality refers to male and female concerns, the majority of gender imbalances in the developing world show a heavy bias against women. VSO has long recognised that poverty will not come to an end until women and men have equal rights and that promoting gender equality is an essential part of poverty reduction across the developing world.

VSO views gender equality as a cross cutting policy goal that applies to all sectors and institutions. VSO acknowledges that assessing progress towards gender equality, unlike gender disparity, is a complex proposition. However, VSO is committed to improving access to resources and opportunities, enabling women and girls to make strategic choices and decisions by increasing their capabilities and creating opportunities for meaningful participation in political and decision making bodies. In education, we put the child's experience of learning at the centre of our work regardless of their gender (VSO, 2007).

Gender Equality in Education: Contexts in Ethiopia and Ghana

Overall progress towards universal primary education in the past decade has been encouraging. Enrolment rates in sub-Saharan Africa increased five times as fast as during the 1990s and gender disparities in primary school narrowed (UNESCO, 2010a). In the period 1997 – 2009, primary school attendance of girls shot from less than a million to 7.4 million in Ethiopia. However, of the 128

countries in the EDI (Education for All Development Index) 3 ranking in the Global Monitoring Report on EFA 2010, Ethiopia ranks in the 126th (0.598) whereas Ghana ranks in the 102th (0.791) position.

Despite significant progress on the EDI in Ethiopia for the period from 1999 to 2007 (EDI went up by more than 12%) its EDI value is lower than that of other sub-Saharan African countries' (except Mali and Niger). This can be seen if we look at other measures. For Ethiopia, in 2007, the primary adjusted NER was 72.3% adult literacy rate 35.9% gender-specific EFA index (GEI) 66.7% and survival rate to grade 5, 64.4%. For the same period, Ghana's primary adjusted NER was 73.3%, adult literacy rate 65%; gender-specific EFA index (GEI) 89.6% and survival rate to grade 5 was 88.6% (UNESCO, 2010a).

The Ministries of Education in both countries have prioritised education as one of the key drivers of nationwide development and currently an estimated 6% of GDP is spent on education, much of which has been spent on increasing primary education. Government spending on education is high (36% of government annual budget in Ghana goes into education for payment of salaries) compared to spending in some other sectors, but this still only covers recurrent costs within education spending, such as salaries. This means a lack of resources elsewhere, such as for textbooks and improvements to school environments. For example, Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition (2010) argues that as a result of under financing of basic schools, about 3,900 schools are organised under trees, 4,000 under sheds and about 16,000 schools are without toilets whilst 800,000 school children are out of school in Ghana⁴.

Both countries have improved their gender parity indexes (GPIs) of the Gross Intake Rate (GIR) at primary level: Ethiopia's GPI increased from 0.69 in 1999 to .0.89 in 2007 whereas Ghana's GPI went up to 1.02 from 0.96 in the same period. Similarly, GPIs of the Net Enrolment Rate (NER) at primary level of both countries in 2007 have also increased (0.92 and 1.01) compared to 0.75 and 0.89 in 1999 (UNESCO, 2010a). The data of recent years suggests that Ghana has in fact achieved gender parity at the primary and junior secondary levels⁵, but considerable geographical disparities exist in educational attainment between northern Ghana and the rest of the country. Northern Ghana (Northern, Upper East and Upper West regions) is the poorest region of the country. In spite of girls' increased access to primary education, their participation, learning and performance are generally lower than for boys in both countries.

The Secondary school gross enrolment ratio for males is higher in both Ethiopia and Ghana than of their female counterparts (52% and 46% vs. 37% and 24%), which indicates that there is greater gender disparity at a higher level of education. Gender disparity is also significant in teacher recruitment. Female teachers make up 84%, 33%, 23% 20% of pre-primary, primary, lower secondary and upper-secondary teachers respectively (UNESCO, 2010a).

In Ethiopia, the government has put progressive legislation in place to promote gender equality and to outlaw gender-based discrimination. Article 35(4) of the constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia states, for example, that "the state shall enforce the rights of women to eliminate the influences of harmful customs, laws, and practices that oppress or cause bodily or mental harm to

³ The Education for All Development Index (EDI) provides a composite measure of progress, encompassing access, equity and quality. EDI is the arithmetic mean of its four components: primary adjusted Net Enrolment Rate (NER), adult literacy rate, Gender-specific Education Index (GEI) and survival rate to grade 5.

⁴ <http://allafrica.com/stories/201004300678.html>

⁵ http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/ghana_1878.html

women.”⁶ At the grass roots level such gender-based discrimination practices are deeply entrenched and as such are very difficult to curb or control. In spite of progressive legislation in place, there is a continuing discrepancy between the law and reality and the challenge, therefore, lies in the transfer of policy to practice.

Barriers for quality education for girls

Poverty

Poverty was one of the most frequently cited barriers for girl’s access to education in both Ethiopia and Ghana in VSO’s baseline research. Girls having to work as carers due to family death or illness came up in a number of focus groups in both countries. In one focus group in Ethiopia all but one girl had lost a parent and been forced to give up school in order to work. One had to give up school to look after her mother, who has TB and another had a father who was very sick and she had to look after him so her mother could work. She noted: *“My father is sick and bed bound. When I see my friends going to school in uniform, I do also like to go to school and I know how important education is for your future. But if I go to school, my mother could not work.”* Many girls had to work to support their families financially (especially those from single-parent families) and/or had increased responsibility for domestic chores in the home. Wealth-based disparities often have a greater impact on girls than they do boys, for example one mother who was the wife of a government official said she fully supported sending her daughters to school, whereas many families from poorer rural backgrounds prioritised their sons over their daughters’ education.

All out-of-school girls who participated in this study, however, knew the importance of education and opportunities that education brings in their lives. They were all willing to go to school if they had the chance.

It was clear from the findings that education inequalities across income groups and gender were great. The girls from the poorest households and rural areas, ethnic and linguistic minorities were the most disadvantaged. In both countries, the baseline study found a similar pattern of high repetition and drop-out rates for girls which lead to low completion rates. Education differentials by income exacerbate gender disparity in these countries.

Ethiopia and Ghana have laws and constitutions enshrining the right to free primary education and they have both introduced a policy of eliminating user fees for primary education, which has resulted in increased enrolment. However, while formal charges were eliminated, informal costs remained a barrier, with many parents continuing to cite inability to afford education as the reason their children, particularly girls and children with disabilities do not attend.

Like all parents, those of marginalized children care about the quality of education. If fee abolition leads directly to heavily overcrowded classrooms, shortages of teaching materials and unmotivated teachers, parents may question the real value of ‘no cost or free’ education. The finding of this paper supports the evidence of the World Bank and UNICEF’s study (2009), which suggests that after abolishing user fees, ‘sequencing reform’ is vital. Sequencing reform means increasing investments in other inputs for quality education upon the abolition of fees. It means increasing investment in teacher preparation and recruitment, their continuing professional development, the provision of textbooks, teaching & learning materials and improved infrastructure which will help bringing more marginalized children, particularly girls and children with disabilities, into school.

<http://www.erta.gov.et/pdf/Constitution.pdf>

Fee abolition is only a partial response to wider poverty constraints affecting demand for education. Making schools affordable to parents of the most marginalized children is likely to involve removing or cutting costs for uniforms, textbooks and other materials (UNESCO, 2010a).

Socio-cultural constraints

Many families in both countries expect girls to get married at an early age and work in the household, for which it is perceived that schooling provides few benefits. According to UNICEF, in total 49% of girls in Ethiopia get married before the age of 17. The girls in rural areas are more likely to give up schooling because of early marriage than their urban counterparts as the proportion of early marriage in rural areas is almost double that of urban areas (55 % versus 27%).

Traditional and cultural beliefs reinforce gender stereotypes that give preference to boys over girls in access to education. As previously illustrated, girls have traditionally shared the role of primary care givers with their mothers and they must work alongside their mothers to generate household income in addition to engaging in the household chores. This prevents girls from attending, remaining and performing in school particularly at the upper primary level when they take on more responsibilities including caring for younger siblings and older relations. Many of the socio-cultural beliefs and practices negatively impacting girls' education were found to be similar in both countries, with some specific issues having a greater impact in each context, such as puberty rites and *Trokosi* (female ritual slavery) in Ghana and female genital mutilation in Ethiopia.

Cultural practices leading to girls' low self-esteem have an impact on parents' perceptions of their daughters' abilities (Rose & Tembone, 2006). The parents and teachers often reported that girls had limited job opportunities in the formal sector, which many parents in Ethiopia and Ghana considered as the most important return on their investment in education. Some parents suggested that boys often had greater aspirations than girls. However girls themselves, who, like boys, often expressed an extremely high level of aspiration and understanding of the opportunities open to them if they succeed in education, did not support this view.

"I would like to become a lawyer to protect women from all kinds of abuse. We need to safeguard their rights." Grade 8 girl, Dawdo School, Amhara, Ethiopia (Berry, 2008, p.8)

Berry (2008) further found that there were no differences between the type of aspirations of children living in urban and rural areas.

When household resources are limited, parents are forced to make choices about which of their children attend school. The decision is usually taken on the basis of gender. Unfortunately, girls enrolled in school are more likely than boys to be withdrawn from school.

Teachers highlighted this issue of domestic chores in Ghana as a contributing factor to drop-outs. Teachers said that

"girls are made to do household chores, unlike boys. This takes away some time for studies on the part of the girl child and as a result her performance in school is below par and her grades are low. The parents see this as a loss in their investment – with the hope that the girl should look after them later. The girl is therefore taken out of school".

In order to address this, teachers stressed a need to educate parents on the need to give parental care to their children in terms of providing uniform, money for food while at school and adequate rest for pupils.

On a positive note, it was observed that social perception and cultural beliefs regarding girls' education were changing slowly because of increased access to information through media (TV and

radio). A mother of five, in Giget, a rural village in Tigary, explained how she did not go to school, remained illiterate and had been married early. In turn, this was the fate of her two elder daughters who now work breaking bricks and whom she describes as 'unhappy'. She then did send her third daughter to school- this daughter is now a diploma graduate in Addis Ababa. Her two sons are currently in grades 8 and 10, and she hopes they go on 'to university and beyond.'

Lack of trained and motivated teachers

Provision of gender sensitive teacher training has a direct impact on the provision of quality inclusive education to increase girls' participation and performance. For example, in the absence of gender sensitive teaching skills, teachers may not seriously consider the participation and contribution of all students, in particular girls, in situations where stereotypical views and discriminatory practices are not often challenged. In most schools involved in VSO's baseline study, teachers were reported as being discriminatory towards girls:

"We (girls) are expected to behave in a culturally appropriate manner, to perform certain tasks that society assigns to us and be obedient. Our teachers often ask us to clean classrooms and offices, fetch water for the school and sometimes undertake tasks for teachers e.g. prepare food." Girls focus group, Ghana

It was found that teachers (both male and female) who had not had any gender training and/or training on inclusive education often considered girls to be less intelligent than boys. Many head teachers, school directors, members of school management committees and parents also held this view. The reasons given for this perception were that girls' performance in the school was often lower than that of boys and they did not participate actively in the classroom. Teachers reported that girls were often weak at English, Maths and Science compared to boys and also less regular in the class. Although there was generally recognition of heavier work burdens on girls, teachers did not always link this factor with their poor performance. There was a strong tendency to blame the child's background and lay the responsibility on the parents. Teachers had difficulty identifying strategies for supporting low achieving pupils (Berry, 2008).

Lack of girl-friendly school environment and quality education

Basic inputs (human and material resources, infrastructure and facilities, instructional time etc) are necessary for learning. Low quality inputs to schools and perceptions of the irrelevance of school further reduce the willingness of parents to send their children to school (Lewis & Luckheed, 2006). For example, parents and students from all regions in Ethiopia expressed a dislike of the shift system of schooling, not regarding it as a full day and a concern about the shortage of teachers (Berry, 2008). The parents and students in Ghana expressed similar views. Instructional time is often limited in urban areas as a consequence of multiple shifts and in rural areas as a consequence of teacher absenteeism. The girls who dropped out of school reported teacher absenteeism as one of the reasons that contributed to their parents' decision for not continuing their education.

Parents, teachers and girls agreed that availability of textbooks and instructional materials are key to both participation and achievement. The girls in both Ghana and Ethiopia reported that increasing the quality of instructional materials would boost their participation and learning achievements. The

majority of head teachers and school directors in the study expressed the challenges they were facing to have basic physical facilities (e.g. safe drinking water, sufficient classrooms and furniture) and basic sanitary facilities (e.g. separate toilets for girls).

All stakeholders agreed that female teachers could serve as role models for girls' participation in education. Their presence is likely to encourage parents to send their children to school, both because they see opportunities for their daughters outside the household and because of the increased sense of security for girls when female teachers are present. The girls confirmed this view stating that they would be comfortable to share the challenges girls face when they reach puberty.

The issue of insecurity on the way to school and in school- due to gender based violence, e.g. sexual abuse, forced prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation and trafficking was also raised in the discussions. Female teachers in the surveys reported concerns with regard to safety in housing and going to school, particularly in rural areas. One female primary school teacher from Oromia, Ethiopia recalled: *When I was teaching in a rural area it was dreadful; the feeling was bad.* Another alluded to the problem of physical and sexual abuse that female teachers face:

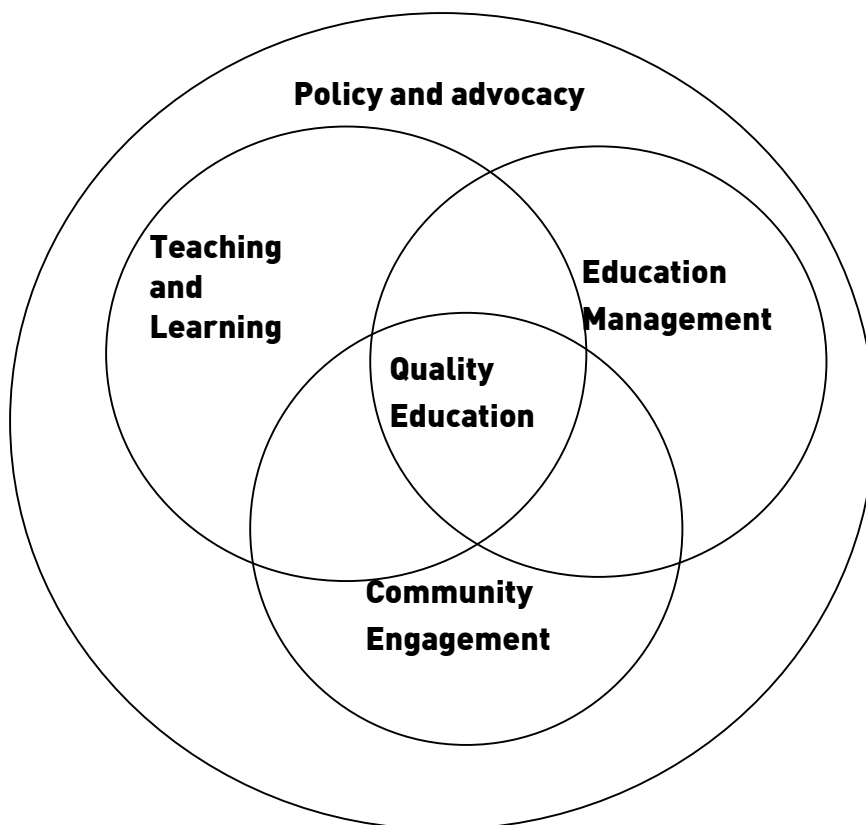
"For females in rural areas, it is difficult to lead their lives because of the sex problems"
(Female secondary teacher, SNNR), (Sarton, Lalla-Maharajh & Person, 2009)

Parental Involvement and Community Participation

Parent involvement includes engaging parents and communities in the governance of schools as well as encouraging parents to create a supportive learning environment for their children at home in which they can study (Lewis & Lockheed, 2006). Involving parents also helps assure them that their girls are safe at school. However, lack of access to educational information at the community level, means that parents lack knowledge and understanding of the functionality of school management structures. Furthermore, members of school management committees and parent teacher associations were not clear about the roles they could play and how they could engage with relevant district structures.

VSO's approach to gender equality in education

In all of VSO's Education programmes one of our key strategies for increasing our impact is to work through multiple interventions at multiple levels of the education system. We believe that if we really are going to improve the *quality of education* for girls and boys in any given school then we need a combination of interventions in overlapping strategic areas to achieve this quality. For example at district level in Ghana we have volunteers training teachers to use gender-sensitive teaching strategies in the classroom, alongside increased support for training, recruitment and deployment of females teachers and sensitisation of parents on the value of education for their daughters. These interventions relate to our key areas of work in education on the ground 'teaching and learning', 'education management' and community engagement' and are reinforced and showcased through our regional and national level policy work in support of girls' education. See diagram below



Promotion of gender equality is one of VSO's development agendas in all its country programmes as a crosscutting theme and thus, supporting the provision of girls' education has been a central focus of VSO Ethiopia and VSO Ghana's Education Programmes. The following sections present how the two countries developed partnerships with the government as well as non-governmental institutions and key stakeholders to increase gender equality in education.

VSO Ethiopia's Interventions

The Ministry of Education officially invited VSO in 1997 to assist the implementation of the Ethiopian Education Sector Development Plan (ESDP). Since then VSO has developed and implemented various programmes with an overarching goal that supports the realization of access to, and quality of, primary education in Ethiopia.

Based on the constraints identified by baseline surveys and previous research in this field (e.g. UNICEF, Save the Children and UNESCO's publication *Taking Stock of Girls' Education in Ethiopia: Preparing for ESDP II, 2005*), VSO Ethiopia selected five constraint areas to address in the education programme. These were:

- Insufficient awareness about the importance of education and support for girls' schooling;
- Absence of pedagogical tools and guidelines for teachers on gender perspectives in teaching in the classroom;
- Weak implementation of continuous assessment and monitoring of girls' attendance and performance;
- Large classes and mixing of different age groups in one classroom;
- Weak school cluster resource centres.

In order to address these constraints, 'gender equality' related activities have been developed and integrated within the comprehensive capacity development interventions that VSO implements at all levels of the education system. In practical terms, VSO Ethiopia's general approach includes:

- Integrating specific and relevant 'gender equality' activities in the partnership plan and incorporating this information in volunteer placement documents
- Organising and providing workshops for volunteers and focal persons from partner organisations on gender equality issues and gender mainstreaming skills
- Providing continuous support for volunteers and Ethiopian colleagues to strengthen the existing systems and structures in partner organisations;
- Facilitating events to share experiences and good practices on gender equality in education between volunteers and partner organisations

During VSO's initial workshops, a special emphasis is given for participants to consider that in mainstreaming a subject like gender some care needs to be taken to ensure that the subject is not gradually sidelined by other emerging agendas. As the subject could be marginalised into a tick box exercise where everyone claims to be doing something but in practical terms nothing positive occurs other than the production of new or amended paper policies. Thus, the gender mainstreaming workshop includes four stages detailing acts that have to be considered by volunteers and Ethiopian colleagues: Stage 1 - the intention to act, Stage 2 Focusing on change, Stage 3, Informing and sustaining change, and Stage 4, Gender as part of culture. Examples of activities for the different 'Stages' is attached as an annex.

VSO Ethiopia focused its interventions on teacher training institutions and mainstreamed gender through the in-service and pre-service teacher training curriculum, teacher training and working with partner schools.

VSO Ghana's approach

Based on the findings of the baselines developed for DFID and CIDA, and on internal and external reviews of the programme, VSO Ghana aims at improving the quality of education through the following strategic objectives:

- To improve the teaching of literacy, numeracy and science education in schools in the focus regions
- To support Ghana Education Service (GES) staff and head teachers to develop and implement effective planning and monitoring systems at circuit, district and regional levels of education system
- To encourage community involvement in the development of schools and advocacy for the delivery of better educational services in the focus regions
- To mainstream gender and HIV and AIDS issues into all education activities at school, district and regional level

In addition to its regular Education programme, VSO in partnership with Comic Relief has started a special gender and disability focused education programme; Tackling Education Needs Inclusively (TENI), to facilitate community action and build linkages to address the poverty and socio-cultural dimensions of girls' education. TENI also aims to strengthen capacities at school, Ghana Education System (GES) and District Assembly levels in order to ensure better performance, retention and completion rates of girls in northern Ghana.

VSO Ghana has adopted a multi stakeholder approach with a wide array of partners (the government and NGOs) to address the barriers that prevent children, particularly girls and those with disabilities, from remaining, completing and performing in schools. VSO Ghana is focusing its' interventions on increased community and parental participation in the governance of schools.

The following table presents the detail of interventions:

VSO's Strategic Interventions to Promote Gender Equality in Education

| Intervention | Ghana | Ethiopia |
|-----------------------|--|---|
| Teaching and learning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empower teachers, head teachers and schools to be more gender sensitive in their teaching, managing pupils and planning at the school level through in-service teacher training run by VSO volunteers. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organise and provide in-service training programmes on gender related issues and gender perspectives in teaching for school teachers, gender- focal (or focussed?) persons and supervisors Deliver training on teaching material production and provide materials to promote child-centred methodology and active girls' performance |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen girls and boys clubs to increase their knowledge on gender, sexuality, HIV and AIDS, career development skills to become more confident and assertive. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support girls' clubs in schools and provide small grants to improve school facilities, such as latrines and water |
| | Train District and Regional gender desk officers to provide continued support to the teachers and head teachers, monitor reports and feedback on lessons to the National level | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide training for teacher educators and administration staff on gender awareness and mainstreaming skills |
| | Increase the number of teachers particularly female teachers, who are well trained and supported to provide quality education for girls and enrich their school experience | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support and strengthen the gender office and girls' union / club in the institutions; organise and deliver training and tutorials for female students |
| Education Management | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build the capacity of education managers to analyse performance and find out why children are not performing and to develop plans to address this | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the process of policy formulation and implementation frameworks to be more gender sensitive |
| | Work alongside PTA/SMCs, Chiefs, youth groups and other opinion leaders in communities to analyze and address socio-cultural barriers that prevent girls and children with disabilities from going to and remaining in school | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen gender mainstreaming in curricula and textbooks revision and development; |
| Community engagement | Link mothers of girls to income-generating opportunities to increase their incomes to enable them maintain their girls in school. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide support for adult literacy in order to promote the importance of education and support for girls' schooling |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out research and advocacy both at National and international level, working with research institutions to publish learning internationally | |

| | | |
|----------------------------|--|---|
| Policy and advocacy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Be part of networks to advocate for gender equality in education. ▪ Undertake and publish experiences and share learning on gender equality in education ▪ Disseminate learning to influence policy at school, district, national and international level. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Undertake and publish experiences and share learning on gender equality in education ▪ Disseminate learning to influence policy at school, district, national and international level. |
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Outcomes

This section presents some outcomes of VSO’s interventions in promoting gender equality in education in Ghana and Ethiopia. Case studies illustrate VSO’s partnership approach, which focuses on capacity building at organisational and individual levels.

Teaching and learning

In Ethiopia, VSO has reached 350 schools through an in-service programme in seven regional states in Ethiopia. VSO volunteers have been directly involved in the development of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) materials for in-service training for school teachers, directors and supervisors in collaboration with the regional education bureaus and colleges of teacher education. Approximately 10,000 teachers have benefited from around 50 hours of in-service training programmes where gender issues were the focus.

In addition to that, VSO has mobilised around 250,000 for provision of small grants to support programmes, where 37 partner schools are rolling out gender related projects. With the small grants, the schools have built many latrines for addressing basic hygiene issues and improved the quality of the school environment. A secondary school girl from one of the participating schools reported that attendance of girls in her school has increased since the school built segregated toilets for girls. She notes: *“Now I do not need to miss my school during my menstruation and having easy access to a girls’ room makes me feel happy to be in the school”*.



“Many girls do not attend school because of lack of toilets. When they are menstruating they have nowhere to wash or change their clothes. Rather than suffer the humiliation of being laughed at by the boys or not allowed to leave the classroom by their teachers they would often stay at home or sometimes run away from school. My colleagues and I were able to work with female teachers to establish “Girls Rooms” in many schools which were often a simple tent in which there was a bucket of water, spare underclothes and sanitary towels. Over a period of time girls attendance equalled that of the boys in most participating schools under Debre Birhan Cluster Unit”.
Ellen Jackson, Cluster Training Coordinator, Debre Birhan

A Girls Room – *Note the poster explaining to the girls how to use the room*

The overwhelming majority of parents reported that their children like attending school and feel that the education is relevant to them and 66% of the parents agreed that ‘the school sanitation facilities and water supply are good’.

“Classrooms in partner schools were colourful and had lively resource materials... Teachers were proud of their classrooms, going to pains to show us round and ensure we observed their hard work”. External evaluator, VSO Ethiopia

In Ghana, girls and boys in partner schools were found to be more knowledgeable about sexuality and HIV and AIDS issues. Through girls and boys clubs, pupils work as peer educators to educate their peers. The head teachers reported that the girls’ attendance, participation in teaching and learning activities has been improved and girls demonstrate more confidence in the classroom. Similarly, in class observations, teachers were found being more gender sensitive and encouraging both girls and boys in the classroom.

Education management

In Ethiopia, VSO has taken a leading role in the implementation of the Higher Diploma Programme nationally. The aim of the Higher Diploma Programme for Teacher Educators is to improve the quality of education in Ethiopia through a licensed programme that will develop the skills and professionalism of teacher educators. It is a mandatory course that has to be taken by all teacher educators. In this programme VSO has trained more than six thousand teacher educators working across Ethiopia so far. Out of its 15 thematic areas, a summary of the evidence for meeting the objectives of the HDP follows in five relevant points.

| | |
|---|--|
| 11. address gender issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender equality is a theme in the HDP. More female candidates have been making their presence felt but despite there being more female candidates, leaders and tutors acting as positive role models there is no room for complacency – numbers are still very low. • It is the focus of debates, action research projects and other gender activities to raise awareness of gender inequality throughout the campuses of universities and CTEs. However there is still a need for more contributions by female lecturers and students. |
| 12. support disadvantaged students in the institution | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The handbook contains opportunity for HDLs to pursue the issue of support for disadvantaged students. It is an area, which will raise many topics for debate and discussion. It is to be recommended that HDLs adapt these sessions to suit the needs and interests of their candidates. |
| 13. promote good citizenship | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptation of some sessions will be needed to fully explore the need to include ethics, morality and spiritual values. • Emphasis on reflection and the use of case studies can raise awareness of the importance of this for teachers and students. |
| 14. play an active part in community development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some candidates focussed on the development of educational communities for their Action Research Projects. • The positive and supportive links with local schools leads to the attainment of this objective. |
| 15. play an active part in institutional development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Projects sometimes take up this theme. Some HDLs play an active role in their institutions and this raises the profile of the HDP in these cases. • There is still a need to focus upon the specific needs of the institution with the aim of becoming a part of the solution, not just a chronicler of the problem |

In addition, volunteers organise various training programmes and tutorials for students at college and university level to improve the academic performance of female students. Around 6 universities have opened a Female Education Centre (FEC) which is a facility / office in the universities to support ALL female students. Additionally now all universities and colleges have Gender Offices and work to:

- Create awareness about gender issues
- Support the learning process of female students
- Decrease attrition rate
- To increase the assertiveness of female students
- Empowering female students
- Strengthen the centres capacity
- To create linkages between females

A detailed example of a VSO volunteer's work in Haramaya University is presented in Annex 2.

Policy and Advocacy

VSO volunteers support the Ministry of Education and federal institutions in gender mainstreaming. In this regard, the following policy documents developed with the involvement of VSO have incorporated gender issues and how to address the needs of girls and women in their education.

1. Higher Diploma Programme Implementation Guidelines, 2005
2. Teacher Development Programme, Blue Paper, 2008
3. National Adult Education Strategy, 2009
4. National Framework for Continuous Professional Development Teachers, 2010

With regards to curriculum development and textbook production, VSO has supported the revision of the English language curriculum and textbooks from grade 1 to 12 VSO volunteers have worked to eliminate all stereotype gender roles presented in the previous textbooks and develop teachers' guidebooks on how they teach the subject in large classes and mixing of different competence level in one class. The textbooks have been printed and circulated across Ethiopia.

Furthermore, the VSO volunteer based in the Gender and Education Equity Department of the Ministry of Education (MoE) has developed a pilot project on Women Adult Literacy in collaboration with the MoE and other actors. The pilot project was to carry out a feasibility study on the use of national volunteers in the provision of adult education. Secondary and college students interested in delivering an adult literacy programme were recruited and then asked to attend a two-week training course. Those who completed the training successfully were given a certificate to provide the service in their neighbourhood.

The pilot project was conducted in Addis Ababa and Bahir Dare Cities and 36 young females were trained and then they delivered training programmes for 180 women in literacy and livelihood skill areas. Finally all aspects of the project was reviewed and evaluated and preliminary findings presented in a workshop in November 2007. The outcome of this project has clearly shown the potential for using student volunteers to support adult skills development in a cost effective manner and to promote gender awareness and girls' education.

Community Engagement

VSO Ghana has found out that working with local grassroots governance structures like district assemblies is a very powerful tool. The following case study illustrates how VSO's capacity building work with women assembly members and community mobilisation has contributed to the promotion of girls' education in Ghana.

Strong female role-models for girls in the community

In a number of districts in Northern Ghana VSO has been working through volunteers to support the community to engage more effectively in girls' education issues. For example in the Upper West district of Nadowli, the volunteer supported the formation and empowerment of Nadowli Assembly Women Advocacy Group (NAWAG), which consists of Sixteen (16) women leaders working across Nadowli District. NAWAG are primarily supporting increased access of children especially the girl child and disadvantaged children to access quality education, however they also support rural poor women and the wider communities of the Nadowli.

Through the capacity building work of the VSO volunteer, NAWAG has developed key skills in planning, liaising with and lobbying key education stakeholders such as GES, PTA's /SMC's, DA, Department for Social Welfare and Community Development, Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs, along with various NGO's and CBOs.

Significant changes that have come about as a result of the partnership are:

- Assembly women are active in identifying and supporting needy girls at risk of missing out on their education. Now they are very proactive in gathering information on issues at the ground affecting girls' access to education and taking up a strong advocacy role and implementing activities to address e.g community sensitization, education stakeholders' forum, formation of Girls retention, enrolment and transition committees at the Area Council Level.
- Assembly women leaders support dormant Area Councils, SMC's and PTA's to be more functional who are now working collectively to support girls education.
- NAWAG members alert Head Teachers, Teachers, Circuit Supervisors, Girl child Officers and the community to work harder and work together on combating issues.
- The concept of Assembly Women has been promoted. This has increased community understanding and support for women into leadership.

As a result of the capacity building of assembly members to mobilise a community, particularly focusing on the participation of women in girls' education, assembly women members have now started to tackle the root causes of gender inequality i.e. poverty by promoting micro-credit schemes for women. A female assembly member said:

"We now have a group fund to develop small business activities. Each woman has put a little amount in a fund and week-by-week one person has the fund to make her business. At the end of the week they pay back the fund and another woman gets it but they keep the profits they have made. Their mothers now meet the girls' needs so they do not need to go to men for money. There used to be many young girls having babies but it has been dropping and this year there was only four. But I am still worried about it – I want it to be zero."

A girl in a focus group shared her education experience and the impact of assembly women on her life:

"Two years ago, I was in JSS¹. I felt comfortable, in JSS² I felt very sad due to the lack of teachers because in my class-we did not have a permanent teacher. In JSS³ things were

¹ Junior Secondary School

strengthening up and I was happy with all the new developments. I became sad again because my mother died and now I had to fend for myself. I gained back confidence in myself as a result of the emotional and financial support from the assembly women and so I am taking my education seriously to be a great person in future”.

Because of community engagement and increased awareness among mothers about the importance of education, assembly women members have been able to identify vulnerable girls before they drop out of school.

Learning

- Quality teaching encourages parents to keep sending girls to school and girls to attend and this needs attention through in-service teacher training and continuing professional development as well as initial teacher training.
- More female teachers as role models also encourage girls to attend school and demonstrate to parents that teaching can be a profession opportunity for women.
- An improved environment including better-equipped classrooms and separate toilet facilities for girls encourages retention.
- Stereotypes are a barrier to families and communities sending girls to school and these can be addressed through advocacy in the community and through parental education
- Strong will and commitment of management and leadership is key to improve gender equality in education.

Conclusion

In tackling the issue of gender equality in education it is important that this is addressed holistically. Focusing on what happens only in the school or classroom is not enough. There is the need to consider other community based barriers as well as economic barriers that impede gender equality in education. For example we have found out that girls will never remain in school so long as their parents experience extreme poverty and are forced to make hard choices to survive. Education programmes need to look at how they can link women to income-generating activities as part of their strategies. Most importantly, participation of all stakeholders e.g. girls, mothers, parents, teachers, community organisations and government officials in planning, implementation and evaluation of education programmes is vital in achieving gender equality in education.

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Annex 1

Table 1 - Awareness, Changing Behaviour & Promotion

| Mainstreaming Stages | Activities | How to proceed... | Resources/ Materials |
|-----------------------------|---|--|--|
| Stage 1 intention to act | Understand process of behavioural change | <p>Read about and understand the historical and cultural context for gender relations in modern Ethiopia.</p> <p>Look at research about behavioural change in the workplace.</p> <p>Share any information that you find with colleagues, stakeholders.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why not get interesting articles translated into the regional language and distribute copies around your colleagues, place of work? | <p>The Internet is a good source of information, see relevant website addresses in the Appendix</p> <p>See section on Ethiopia-specific facts and statistics</p> <p>See section on the social context of gender in Ethiopia</p> |
| | Promote awareness of negative aspects gender discrimination. Promote positive advantages of dealing with gender equality | Disseminate materials related to gender and mainstreaming in your workplace | <p>Internet – see web site list.</p> <p>VSO Library –see resources list</p> |
| | Hold awareness-raising discussions | <p>Discuss the issues surrounding gender behaviour, including HIV/AIDS, sex and relationships, changing perceptions of traditional gender roles and the impact of development/ globalisation on this process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why not hold a coffee ceremony? This is a good opportunity for men and women to present their ideas, thoughts and feelings to each other in an informal context. | <p>VSO resource centre:</p> <p>“Life Skills Manual” Peace Corps (4.17.3)</p> <p>“Gender and relationships” (4.17.3)</p> |

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| | Gender awareness training | Organise a workshop to raise awareness on gender role behaviour and promote change. An alternative may be a regular meeting in the tea room to discuss specific issues. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CD: example of how VSO integrates gender into their organisational planning. OGM: section C3, especially activity 15 |
| | Invite positive role models | <p>Arranging for positive role models to come and talk at your workplace is a powerful way to inspire your colleagues, or students, to seek to challenge and improve gender relations in the workplace/community.</p> <p>Remember to negotiate a payment with the speaker before the event.</p> | Ask colleagues if they have any contacts with local NGOs or know of a role model, such as a female doctor or journalist. |
| | Organise/ support activities for International Women's Day | <p>Why not organise something in your workplace such as quizzes, displays, panel discussions, etc. Support any local events that the Women's Affairs Bureau/ local NGO's might organise.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ If you work in education, think about including gender in your classes on this day? | Remember that International Women's Day is on the 8 th of March |
| | Add articles to your organisation's newsletter or get a colleague to write one | Some ideas for articles are: interview a local person who is a positive gender role model, or profile a local project that is challenging traditional gender role perceptions. Have some of your colleagues write on gender and related issues. | Keep a database or folder of articles on gender-issues |
| | Contact other organization with behavioural change projects | Contact with other organisations in the local community can avoid duplication of the effort, and help you learn about good practice. Also, they may already have training materials, core trainers, etc. | <p>A list of local organisations working on gender issues may be obtained from the W.A.B.</p> <p>OGM: handout 102</p> |

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|---------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| <p>Stage 2</p> <p>Focusing change</p> | <p>Organise a panel discussion, or invite someone to give a talk on a gender issue relevant to your workplace</p> | <p>Invite people from local organisations to take part in a panel discussion or to give a talk on specific issues. They should be knowledgeable about gender issues, e.g. FGM, gender and HIV/AIDS.</p> | <p>In the appendix there is a list of organisations working in gender in Ethiopia.</p> |
| | <p>Colleagues from your workplace run an awareness-raising campaign on a specific gender issue in the local community</p> | <p>Encourage colleagues to organise and run a campaign in the local community on a gender issue that is unique to them.</p> | <p>VSO: small grant funds are available to support an awareness-raising campaign.</p> |
| | <p>Train peer educators or community educator to promote gender-related issues</p> | <p>An effective and sustainable way to reach many people, and also to overcome the language problem, is to train a group of people who can then train/ educate others within the community or their peer group. There are some manuals in the VSO resource centre that explain more about peer education.</p> | <p>VSO resource centre/CD-ROM: “Life Skills Manual” Peace Corps (4.17.3)</p> |
| | <p>Work with a community dialogue project</p> | <p>Find out who is doing what and support them</p> | |
| | <p>Assist the W.A.B. in your region with a behavioral change education program.</p> | | |
| | <p>Develop manuals for behavioural change activities</p> | <p>Use this manual or other resources listed in the references Oxfam manual is excellent</p> <p>Be aware of Continuing Professional Development Modules on Gender in Teacher training</p> | <p>▪ CPD Modules are on the CD</p> |
| | <p>Make a regular contribution to a radio show or newspaper column</p> | <p>Contact organizations already working on gender</p> | |

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|-------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Stage 3 Sustaining change | Develop guidelines to behavioral change projects | | TOR |
| | Share in best practice in respect to behavioral change actions | All sectors at regional and/or national level to work together to promote gender equality and related issues at a key element in their sector agendas. | |
| | Develop ongoing gender awareness program for new employees | | |
| Stage 4 Gender sensitive culture | Look at evaluating the impact of the work so far. Monitor projects and circulate best practice Be prepared to take remedial action by dropping back to a previous stage | Evaluation and monitoring of projects will indicate any positive progress towards gender sensitivity | See section on Evaluation and monitoring |

Annex 2

Haramaya University Launched Tutorials for dismissed female students, first of its Kind in the History of Ethiopian Higher Education

Significant changes have been observed in female students' enrolment at all levels of education in Ethiopia. Lots of efforts have been made to bring about such changes. Yet, the female attrition rate still questions the viability of stakeholders' inputs. The scenario is graver when it comes to the tertiary levels of education, despite the fact that different affirmative action measures have been put into effect. With this perspective, Haramaya University has tried to address the problem through different mechanisms.

The university established and strengthened the Gender Office so as to render different services for female students in the university, for example, arranging training for newly admitted female students on assertiveness and study skills; Gender Awareness, Leadership and Club Management for Girls' Union and Forum; Gender Sensitive leadership skills for female students of School of Graduate Studies and staff; providing guidance and consultation services for all female students as the need arises, providing economic support for needy students, especially to female students, tutorial services for newly-admitted female students as well as now for academically dismissed students. For academically dismissed students, a pilot project was initiated by the Office of the Academic Vice President (AVP) and put into practice by involving Gender Office, the Departments of Mathematics and English, English Language Improvement Centre (ELIC) and Registrar's Office. The whole program was

led by the AVP and coordinated by Gender Office. Gender Office followed up each activity on a daily basis and had contact with the instructors.

The program was started by selecting academically dismissed first year female students in collaboration with the Office of the Registrar. 257 (two hundred fifty seven) students were selected whose grade was between 1:00- 1:49 in two phases based on their entry to the university. Alongside this, teaching materials on basic Mathematics and English courses were prepared by the instructors of each subject, orientation was given to the students and those involved in the teaching process about the overall program and what was expected of them. Classrooms were reserved especially for the program. Students were divided into a total of 6 groups - 4 groups in 1st batch and 2 groups in 2nd batch- over a period of 2 months.

English and Mathematics courses: These courses formed the central part of the program. Classes were arranged 5 days a week for an hour and a half each session. Text materials were prepared especially for the program so as to improve these students' numeracy, communication, and listening and grammar skills to enable them to cope with modes of teaching in the university. Students' progress was evaluated based on frequent tests, class participation and class attendance and final exams were held. The students were awarded automatic readmission based on the recommendations made by their instructors.

In addition to English classes delivered by staff in the Department of English Language, the English Language Improvement centre at HU offered English support to students once a week in a 2-hour session entitled '**Group work in English**'. The materials were prepared and taught by Linda Robertson, VSO ELIC coordinator, to 4 groups in 1st batch and 2 groups in 2nd batch. The sessions aimed to give students the chance to work closely with a native speaker of English and to improve their communicative skills in speaking, listening reading and writing. The students worked hard in the sessions, attended regularly and participated very well. Improvements, especially in speaking, general understanding of spoken English and overall confidence were observed by the VSO volunteer. The project was a rewarding and interesting experience in which ELIC would willingly participate in the future.

Among the many classes, the female support program also provided a section dedicated to identify **vital life skills and study skills**. The schedule of this class was designed to address each topic alternatively. In the life skills segment, dealing with conflict, improving relationship and building confidence were illustrated to students. This segment also included activities that allowed the female students to build up a rapport and foster a bond with other classmates. The study skills section addressed a number of topics imperative to academic success. These topics included: effective listening, time management, testing skills, and dealing with test anxiety.

"As the instructor, I believe class was beneficial because it provided an opportunity for students to practice speaking in English, as well as listen to a native English speaker. In addition, through various writing assignments, there was an overall improvement in the quality of writing by the end of the semester." Sheetal shah, IFESH Volunteer.

When the program finished, the Gender Office prepared a questionnaire to gain valuable feedback regarding the overall program and reasons for dismissal. Through this questionnaire, the office came to understand that the program had multiple academic, social and economic effects on the students. They are, but not limited to:

1. Enabling the students to revise and gain knowledge on the subject areas mentioned above.

2. Giving ample time for the students to read about those subjects they are weak in, which were usually the reasons for academic dismissal.
3. Helping students, especially those from rural areas, avoid involvement in risky life styles. Academically dismissed female students tend to remain in the surrounding cities rather than going back home to their families. Consequently, many female students begin to work as housemaid or commercial sex workers and are more vulnerable to unwanted and unplanned marriage.



VSO is a federation of member organisations that all contribute volunteers and resources from Canada, India, Ireland, Kenya, the Netherlands, the Philippines and the UK to fight poverty in 42 developing countries. VSO has education programmes in 19 countries. Volunteers support improvements in education by working in teacher training colleges and with schools on developing teaching methods. They also work within the mainstream education system to overcome the barriers to marginalised groups, for example by improving policies relating to and the provision of inclusive education in partnership with local and national government in areas such as assessment, strategic planning, national curriculum development, monitoring and evaluation and national quality standards.



VSO also undertakes national level advocacy research through its *Valuing Teachers* campaign and is an active member of the Global Campaign for Education, an international coalition of charities, civil society organisations, and education unions that mobilises public pressure on governments to provide the free education for all children they promised to deliver in 2000. Since 2000, VSO's *Valuing Teachers* research has been conducted in 13 countries and is currently underway in two further countries. Following the research, advocacy strategies are developed, which include the development of volunteer placements in: civil society education coalitions, and Ministries of Education.

In addition to this publication the following research may also be of interest:

- **How Much is a Good Teacher Worth?** – A Report on the Motivation and Morale of Teachers in Ethiopia
- **Learning From Listening** – A Policy Report On Maldivian Teachers Attitudes to Their Own Profession, Louise Wheatcroft
- **Lessons from the Classroom** – Teachers' Motivation in Nepal, Purna Shrestha
- **Listening to Teachers** – The Motivation and Morale of Education Workers in Mozambique, Simone Doctors
- **Making Teachers Count** – A Policy Research Report on Guyanese Teachers' Attitudes to Their Own Profession, Leena Vadher
- **Managing Teachers** - Chikondi Mpokosa, Susy Ndaruhutse, Carole McBride, Stephen Nock and Jonathan Penson
- **Seen But Not Heard** – Teachers' Voice in Rwanda, Reed Thomas and Ruth Mbabazi
- **START** – Simple Toolkit for Advocacy Research Techniques, Lucy Tweedie
- **Teachers for All** – What governments and donors should do, Stephen Nock, Lucia Fry.
- **Teachers Speak Out** – A Policy Research Report on Teachers' Motivation in The Gambia, Sara Cowan
- **Teacher Talking Time** – A Policy Research Report on Malawian Teachers' Attitudes to Their Own Profession, Marianne Tudor-Craig
- **Teachers' Voice** – A Policy Research Report on Teachers' Motivation and Perceptions of Their Profession in Nigeria, Helen Sherry

- **Teaching Matters** - A Policy Report on The Motivation and Morale of Teachers in Cambodia, Sarah Jago, Peter and Margaret Harvey, Julia Lalla-Maharajh, Freda Ellis
- **They've Got Class!** – A Policy Research Report on Zambian Teachers' Attitudes to Their Own Profession, Saskia Verhagen
- **Valuing School Leaders** - An Investigation into the Constraints Facing School Leaders in Their Efforts to Improve the Quality of Education in The Maldives Sue O'Shaughnessey
- **What makes teachers tick?** – VSO policy report, Lucia Fry

These publications are available from the VSO International website:

www.vsointernational.org/valuingteachers