

Programme Area Summary

Country: India

Programme Area: Disability 2004 -2007

What is the aim of the programme area?

To enable disabled women, men, girls and boys to participate in mainstream development

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

WHO recognizes that 10% of the world's population is disabled and 20% of the poorest people are disabled. India accounts for the largest national population of disabled people of 70 million women, men, girls and boys – a figure the same as the entire population of UK. They have been put at great disadvantage – being excluded from policies, plans, programmes and services of mainstream development as well as denied a voice in traditional institutions of authority and political structures.

In the recent past the concept of development that is inclusive of disabled people has emerged. This coupled with the presence of Disabled People's Organizations (DPO) at the national and state levels encouraged VSO India to take an active role in response to disability issues like poor access to education and low employment opportunities.

Key Beneficiaries and Partners

- National Level
 - National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People
 - Haemophilia Federation of India
- State Level
 - Orissa: Swabhiman, Open Learning Systems and Ekta
 - West Bengal: Sanchar and Pratibandhi Kalyan Kendra
 - Delhi: Delhi Association of the Deaf and Score Foundation
- Strategic partners for different programme themes:
 - Chetna Vikas in Jharkhand – local governance and community based rehabilitation (CBR) programmes and training
 - Jan Seva Parishad – livelihoods
 - National Association of the Deaf – information sharing
 - Swabhiman – voice in local governance
 - EKTA, Open Learning System, Aaina, Astha – rehabilitation
 - Central Tibetan Administration – inclusive education

Key Objectives of the programme and the cross-cutting themes

- Building Capacity of State and National Level Network organisations
- Promoting inclusion of disabled people in the Development Processes
- Building strategic partnership with service delivery organisations for greater impact

In order to achieve these objectives VSO India will promote development that is inclusive of disabled people within its rights-based programme approach and its partners and contacts.

Current programme activities

Focus of International Volunteer Placements

- Organisational Development inputs to build the capacity of the Indian disabled movement and Civil Society Organisations

Programme Area Summary

- Physiotherapist, Occupational Therapists, HR Advisors, Communications Advisors and other disciplines that provide services to disabled people.

Workshops, Training & Conferences

- Disability Sensitisation workshops with strategic partners to create awareness on Disability.
- Access audit being conducted by VSO with partner organisations in promoting accessibility as a component in the programmes.
- Initiated Disability network in Chattisgarh to build a network of disabled people so that they can advocate for their rights and entitlements.
- Workshops to build partners' capacity to mainstream disability in their programmes. This has provided a forum for collective exploration of disability components

Research

- A desk research study was carried out to ascertain issues related to disability and disability rights in India.

Advocacy and Global Education

- VSO India is a member of the Disability Right Group, an informal alliance of organisations of and for disabled people. As part of its advocacy commitments, two major partners were able to establish the Disability Activists Forum in the communities where they work.
- In addition since 2002 VSO India has been an active contributor to, and participant in events to mark International Day of Disabled People. This included a round-table meeting of Hilary Benn, UK Secretary of State for International Development, with disability activists in India. This resulted in Benn lobbying for VSO India in UK parliament.

Providing Grants and/or equipment for partners

- Supported partner organisation Aaina in their International Disability Day celebrations. Around 100 participants attended the programme from 16 schools and 2 colleges of Kamakhyanagar block. In addition, around 15 youths of the same block participated as volunteers in the programme.
- To initiate a Disability network in Chattisgarh, VSO supported a workshop organised by Sabala, Path and Chaupal to support people with disabilities to advocate for their rights and entitlements.

Development of publications or other materials for training of communication

- The programme has produced a comprehensive background paper that is used by key players in the disability sector.
- VSO volunteers have supported and facilitated the diversification of communication tools and strategies to two partners which supported them to plan and implement the communication activities.

Other partnership activities:

- VSO India is involved even with non-volunteering partnerships such as with Samarthya. This group's focus is on the issue of accessibility which was used by the programme to assist in making the ground floor of the office fully accessible. In return assisted Samarthya produced a leaflet on simple access adaptations.

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

VSO India has led by example by initiating some positive steps for promoting disability as a rights-based approach, such as:

Programme Area Summary

- Inclusive recruitment process that encouraged people with disabilities to apply for positions in the organisation.
- 40% of the staff are people with disabilities.
- An accessible ground floor of VSO India office
- Installation of JAWS, a computer software to enable visually impaired people to use the computer system.
- Volunteers and staff are trained in Indian Sign Language.
- In-Country Orientation programme of volunteers has dedicated time to enable volunteers to be sensitive to the needs of people with disabilities and address issues of disabilities in their placement

VSOI ensures cross cutting programme issues contribute to sustainable development. It therefore promotes integration of Disability, HIV and AIDS and Participation and Good Governance through volunteer input, advocacy and sensitisation.

In terms of partnership, support from VSOI enabled the Central Tibetan Administration to develop an inclusive basic education policy and an action plan. Other partners like SGUP have been able to integrate disability in the programmes they are implementing: Swabhimaan is a lead organisation in promoting rights of people with disabilities, HelpAge India is addressing disability issues in their current programmes and plan to make their office accessible to disabled while Christian Aid will involve VSO in Social Equity Audit.

Through the efforts of VSO Volunteers a network of women (Hand in Hand) gained sufficient public exposure to raise issues concerning them. In addition volunteers developed systematic and coherent fundraising and communication strategies for advocacy on disability.