

Programme Area Summary

Country: Namibia

Programme Area: HIV & AIDS

What is the aim of the programme area?

The HIV & AIDS Programme Area will focus interventions on improving and increasing access to prevention and treatment services for people infected and affected by HIV and AIDS, and reducing the burden of care on communities.

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

In 2000 VSO Namibia moved from implementing a Health programme to an HIV & AIDS programme linked with VSO's Regional AIDS Initiative in Southern Africa (RAISA). RAISA supports government institutions and civil society organizations to provide effective prevention, treatment, care and advocacy for people affected by HIV & AIDS. In the Namibian context we seek to address the following issues:

- The Ministry of Health and Social Services supplies Anti-Retroviral Treatment (ART) to the public. Anecdotal reports suggest this encourages people at risk to undergo Voluntary Counselling and Testing. However the stigma surrounding HIV & AIDS is still a significant barrier to this and there are still high rates of high risk behaviour e.g. multiple partners, lack of condom use and not seeking treatment for STIs.
- There is a critical shortage of skilled human resources in Namibia; at both clinical and programmatic level. The NGO community in Namibia has a high turnover, and this affects sustainability. Medical practitioners and other clinicians often choose work in the private sector.
- Coordination between policy and operational levels is lacking.
- Most donors feel that Namibia is not a developing country and the economy and social welfare system is better than in other Sub-Saharan countries. This has led to a withdrawal of donors and reduction in funding for HIV & AIDS programmes.
- This situation is exacerbated when seeking to work with a gender focus in Namibia. What development agencies there are focus on HIV & AIDS. For example the Gender, Research and Advocacy Project of the Legal Assistance Center is in a serious funding crisis while the AIDS Law Unit continues to receive funding.
- Similar to other developing countries, women in Namibia have low economic and social status which increases their susceptibility to HIV infection. Cultural norms, such as a woman having limited ability to make sexual choices, also negatively affect women.

We work with Community Based Organisations (CBOs) who are by nature, fragile, task based organizations with limited institutional identity or capacity. The flow of technical and financial support to the grassroots level is difficult and limited. There is a need to unblock this flow and to build up the potential of communities. Left alone CBOs will continue to respond to crisis management. Through providing training and support through linkages and networks we hope to strengthen their response and ability to plan accordingly. The HIV & AIDS Programme Area Plan is also addressing gender inequalities as an important and integral part of the HIV & AIDS strategy.

Key beneficiaries and partners:

Beneficiaries

- People infected and affected by HIV and AIDS

Partners

- Ministry of Health & Social Services.
- Ombetja Yehinga Organisation: HIV & AIDS prevention for youth.
- TOV: working with Orphans and Vulnerable Children in the Oshikoto region.

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- Onuna Vetu Care Network: community-based organizations working with Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Windhoek.
- Yelula: a project aimed at strengthening the HIV & AIDS sector by supporting Organisation Development.
- Legal Assistance Center: protecting the human rights of all Namibians through: litigation, information and advice, education and training, research, law reform and advocacy.
- TKMOAMS: consisting of over 800 active Home Based Care volunteers.
- Rundu OVC Network: a network of community based organizations working with Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Rundu
- Friendly Haven: an NGO working with survivors of domestic violence and sexual abuse, primarily women and children, and is a project of a Faith Based Organisation.
- Lifeline/Childline: an NGO that provides psychosocial counselling.
- Ministry of Gender and Child Welfare.

Key objectives of the programme and the cross-cutting themes

- To support the Ministry of Health and Social Services in improving management systems, coordination, planning and appropriate service delivery of HIV and AIDS Anti-Retroviral Therapy (HAART) programmes. This support will be at a central level in Khomas, and at regional level in Kunene and Omusati. VSO will work with the National AIDS Coordinating Programme and the Regional Health Management Teams to improve service delivery in the ART Clinics and strengthen management and financial systems.
- To support community-based prevention and care efforts, VSO will work with OYO, TOV and Yelula and new partners to improve management and financial systems, internal and external policy development, and service delivery.
- To support the formation of networks that help CBOs working with children affected by HIV & AIDS to share their learning and develop a collective response to community needs and rights.
- As part of a comprehensive response to HIV & AIDS VSO will work with all its partners to mainstream HIV & AIDS.

Current programme activities

Focus of International Volunteer Placements

- The core of VSO's work in the programme is to place international volunteers to work with government Non Governmental Organizations (NGO) and Community Based Organizations (CBO) to strengthen management systems and service delivery. Examples of this include:
 - A Finance Manager working with the Ministry of Health and Social Services to strengthen and monitor disbursement of funds from the Global Fund on AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.
 - An HIV & AIDS Advisor with Kunene Regional Council implementing community outreach programmes that includes mobilisation of men to participate in Home Based Care.
 - A Gender Training Advisor working with a project within the Ministry of Education to integrate gender in school curriculum development.
- The HIV & AIDS Programme is currently developing a placement for a Youth for Development (YfD) volunteer to support youth programmes in the Northern region. There is one YfD volunteer working on supporting an organisation in programme management and this placement has led to the development of another volunteer to work in a similar manner in the coastal region.

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Support to national volunteering

- The programme is developing a placement to support national volunteering for TKMOAMS and possibly one other partner.

Partner exchange visits/study tours

- The programme has conducted two exchange visits to South Africa for the Shelter Network and Social Workers from the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare.

Workshops, training & conferences

- The programme has supported partners from CBOs to attend the RAISA-led Food Security Conference in South Africa in 2006.

Advocacy and Global Education

- An advocacy programme will be developed in collaboration with TKMOAMS, a partner in the North, on reducing the burden of care on women and children.

Providing grants and/or equipment for partners

- Through the small grants funds, partners have attended training in management systems and communications.
- Volunteers in the HIV & AIDS Programme can apply for grants either through the British High Commission Grant or the RAISA Small Grants Fund. Last year, six grants were disbursed, and activities conducted included an exchange visit from South Africa, purchasing of equipment to facilitate programme implementation and conducting outreach activities to schools in Kunene region.

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

VSO Namibia has received praise from partners for our participatory approach to development as well as for our work in supporting small organizations to become more independent and sustainable. With the Ministry of Health; VSO Namibia is one of three organizations that are able to provide the ministry with doctors and pharmacists to work in the the HAART programme.

Through RAISA, VSO has been able to create networks that have resulted in improved the quality of services that is provided, especially by small local organizations.