

Programme Area Summary

Country: Namibia

Programme Area: Secure Livelihoods

What is the aim of the programme area?

To contribute to improving the living conditions of disadvantaged people in Namibia through tackling unemployment and increasing rural incomes.

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

Unemployment and under-employment are some of the key development issues in Namibia leading to consistent poverty for more than half of Namibia's population. Unemployment stands at around 35% in urban areas, while rural areas are characterised by high levels of under-employment. More worryingly, unemployment amongst young people is estimated to be above 50%. In addition to a skills shortage, there appears to be a mismatch between the outputs of education and training institutions and labour market needs. Most vocational and skills training also maintains traditional gender roles. Further, graduates of both general and tertiary education are lacking in general competencies such as English language, problem solving skills, good work ethic, creativity and entrepreneurship.

Also, in rural areas employment options are very limited and the prime means of people making a living is through subsistence farming. Although Communal Area Conservancies¹ offer people living in rural areas an opportunity to make decisions about and benefit from the management of natural resources in their areas, this requires considerable skill and effort. The demand for support has outstripped the current capacity of support organisations – a situation likely to continue in the foreseeable future.

Key beneficiaries and partners

Partner organisations:

- Namibia Association for CBNRM² Support Organisations (NACSO).
- Namibia Community-based Tourism Association (NACOBTA).
- Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC).
- The Rössing Foundation (RF).
- Omaheke San Trust (OST).
- Working Group for Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa (WIMSA).
- Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET).
- Namibia Training Authority (NTA).
- Community Skills Development Centres (COSDEC):
- Katutura Youth Enterprise Centre (KAYEC):
- The University of Namibia (UNAM) Northern campus
- Valombola Vocational training Centre

Beneficiaries:

The beneficiaries are mostly rural communities in 9 (nine) of Namibia's 13 regions. Most of these communities are organised in conservancies, while the remaining are situated in peri-urban areas supported by the variety of NGOs, Ministries and Associations.

¹ Organized amalgamation of communities within a demarcated area – see map at bottom of summary

² Community-Based Natural Resource Management

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Key objectives of the programme and the cross-cutting themes

- To strengthen the capacity of NGOs implementing CBNRM activities within conservancies in order to increase the range and variety of small enterprises.
 - Close partnerships with the Business and Enterprise Development Working Group of NACSO, local NGOs and CBOs working within conservancies to develop tourism opportunities, crafts development, exploration of natural products, and other small-scale rural enterprises. NGOs involved in enterprise development with extremely disadvantaged groups such as the San peoples, are also included in this programme.
- To increase and sustain the learning and sharing of knowledge about enterprise development within CBNRM
 - Building the capacity of organisations responsible for technical and business skills development so that people can either gain employment within an existing organisation or business or gain self-employment by establishing small enterprises.
 - A key partner will be the UNAM Northern Campus small business development unit which provides training and support to organisations of people with disabilities supported through the Namibia Disability Programme (NDP) and small CBOs and NGOs targeted through VSO's regional HIV&AIDS RAISA programme.

Current programme activities

Focus of International Volunteer Placements

- Long term volunteer placements focusing on a variety of skills areas, including:
 - Organisational development
 - Enterprise development
 - Management advice (finance, human resources and administrative)
 - Technical advice on arts, craft, natural products and tourism in general
- Short-term volunteer placements focusing on business and strategic planning. Organisations will receive support to strengthen their capacities in financial sustainability, management and business planning.

Advocacy and Global Education

- Mainstreaming HIV& AIDS through volunteer placement.
- The importance of gender will be incorporated at all levels of the programme work, and gender awareness training will be rolled out wherever possible.

Partner exchange visits/study tours

- Partners will be assisted in mainstreaming HIV and AIDS in their programmes

Providing grants and/or equipment for partners

- Small grants for mainstreaming HIV and AIDS

Other partnership activities

- VSO will continue to be involved in key networks like the Namibian Non-governmental Organisation Forum (NANGOF) to support the Secure Livelihoods Programme. These networks are providing not only information and knowledge, but also offer training programmes and other capacity building initiatives. Through VSO's involvement in these networks, partner organisations in the secure livelihoods programme will be able to benefit from the services on offer through the network organisations.
- In addition, partners will be assisted in mainstreaming HIV and AIDS in their programmes through the promotion and implementation of workplace policies, information sharing, volunteer placements (as in the case of NACSO), small grants and exchange visits.

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

VSO Namibia has a strong and unique partnership with NACSO and has been working with some of its member organisations for more than ten years, building a reputation as an organisation that understands development issues and in particular, the development needs of disadvantaged people in rural areas. VSO has been providing a range of financial and administrative skills to strengthen the management capacity of NGOs who in turn provide appropriate and relevant CBNRM services to communities in rural areas.

Quite a significant impact has been made in the north-central and north-eastern regions of the country where community members have reaped the benefits of turning natural resources into marketable products (crafts). Tourism is one of Namibia's main sources of income and more recently, community-based tourism is being promoted at national level, prompting NGOs to assist rural communities to identify opportunities through which they can benefit e.g. joint ventures with private investors. VSO's experience in business and enterprise development contributes to laying a foundation for community members to become sufficiently business-oriented to seize opportunities to earn an income and enhance their living conditions.

Registered and Emerging Communal Conservancies

