

DEPARTMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

REVIEW OF VSO, 2003

July 2003

Volume 1 Main Report

Jim Munro
Information and Civil
Society Department
DFID

Ann Muir and Francis Watkins
Edinburgh Resource Centre
University of Edinburgh
25 Buccleuch Place
Edinburgh
EH8 9LN

CONTENTS

Volume 1 Main Report

	Executive Summary	v
1	Introduction	1
2	Volunteers in Development	2
2.1	Volunteering and Development	2
2.2	Recruitment and the Programmatic Approach	3
2.3	Cost-effectiveness	5
2.4	Partnership Building	6
2.5	Issues Raised by the Review	8
3	Outcome 1: Capacity Building	8
3.1	Overview of Country Programmes	8
3.2	Enhancing the Capacity of Organisations in the South	9
3.3	Issues Raised by the Review	10
3.4	Education Goal	11
3.5	Issues Raised by the Review	12
3.6	HIV/ AIDS Goal	13
3.7	Issues Raised by the Review	15
4	Outcome 2: Development Awareness	15
4.1	Overall Progress	15
4.2	Work with Returned Volunteers	16
4.3	Global Education	17
4.4	Advocacy and Media Campaigns	18
4.5	Issues Raised by the Review	20
5	Outcome 3 and Monitoring and Evaluation	20
5.1	Enhanced Learning and Dissemination	20
5.2	Monitoring and Evaluation	21
5.3	Issues Raised by the Review	23
6	Next PPA	23

Volume 2 Annexes

Annexes

- A1 Terms of Reference
- A2 Methodology
- A3 DFID PPAs - Levels of Funding
- A4 PPA Monitoring Framework November 2002
- A5 Volunteers in Development: VSO Position Paper
- A6 Volunteer Recruitment
- A7 Volunteering and SNV, APSO and UNV
- A8 Volunteer Unit Costs
- A9 Steps in Partnership Building
- A10 Discussion with VSOB Partners
- A11 Volunteer Activity by Development Goal Area
- A12 Programme Funding Grants 2001/02 and 2002/03
- A13 Summary OPR
- A14 Progress Towards Outcome 1, the Education Development Goal
- A15 Progress Towards Outcome 1, the HIV/ AIDS Development Goal
- A16 Progress Towards Outcome 1, the Disability Development Goal
- A17 VSOs' Proposal for Assessing Outcome 2
- A18 Progress Towards Outcome 3, Learning and Dissemination
- A19 Advocacy
- A20 Strategic Resource Allocation Process, including PET
- A21 Bangladesh Visit Report
- A22 Ghana Visit Report
- A23 Summary Tables of Country Strategy Papers:
 - A23.1 Ethiopia
 - A23.2 Kazakhstan
 - A23.3 Nigeria
 - A23.4 Papua New Guinea
 - A23.5 Tanzania
 - A23.6 Vietnam
- A24 Local Group Meetings: Edinburgh, Newcastle, Portsmouth and Chichester and West London
- A25 Literature and Documentation used by the Review
- A26 People and Organisations Met/ Contacted by the Review team

ACRONYMS

ACP	Annual country plan
ACR	Annual country report
APSO	Agency for Personal Service Overseas
CAP	Country Assistance Plan of DFID
CEF	Cambridge Education Foundation
CIIR	Catholic Institute for International Relations
CSP	Country strategic plan
EFA	Education for all
GCE	Global campaign for education
GES	Ghana Education Service
HST	Higher Specialist Training
ICD	International Corporation for Development
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MoE	Ministry of Education
OPR	Output to purpose review
OVC	Orphans and vulnerable children
PET	Performance effectiveness tool
PLWHA	People living with HIV and AIDS
PRS	Poverty reduction strategy
RAISA	Regional HIV/ AIDS Initiative of Southern Africa
SNV	Stichting Nederlands Vrijwilligers
SRA	Strategic resource allocation
UKOWLA	UK One World Linking Association
UNV	United Nations Volunteers
VMM	Volunteer Missionary Movement
VSOB	VSO Bangladesh
VSOE	VSO Ethiopia
VSOG	VSO Ghana
VTC	Valuing Teachers Campaign
WMYA	World Millennium Youth Awards

DEFINITIONS

Capacity building	The development of organisational and relational capacities through organisational development and organisational strengthening, and sector development and strengthening.
Programmatic approach	VSO defines a 'programmatic approach' as a more strategic approach led by the vision of an overarching development aim. It links together a range of activities including volunteer placements and other agencies and partners' work in a shared endeavour to meet the goal. It demands empowerment, partnership and learning as well as co-ordination.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Volunteers in Development and Partnership

i One of the most important findings of the review is that volunteers are central to the work of VSO and play a key role in development. This may seem like an obvious statement, but it is something that is not properly reflected in the current PPA. The PPA focuses in the main on where VSO can contribute to DFID's agenda and not on VSO's own unique contribution to development. The recently produced VSO Position Paper, *The Role of Volunteers in International Development*, sets out in detail the full range of contributions that volunteers make to development. In the terms of the current PPA, the most important contributions that volunteers make are:

- They are central to the ethos of the work that VSO does both nationally and internationally, with a focus on equal partnership and the importance of individual skills, experience and motivation;
- They are highly valued by partners, governments and donors in developing countries as well as by other organisations in the UK;
- They bring much needed skills, commitment and motivation to development work and VSO is able to quickly source the right combinations for the situations in particular countries;
- They take the skills and commitment with them into a wide range of spheres after their placement, as is evident in the development awareness work described below.

ii VSO's contribution to development is particularly important in the present context, with increasing efforts being made internationally to achieve the MDGs. In order to achieve these goals, efforts are being focused on Poverty Reduction Strategies and as a result many donors are moving away from traditional projects and programmes to work at a higher and more strategic level, through mechanisms such as sector-wide approaches and general budgetary support. At the same time, increasingly large amounts of money are being directed towards specific areas, such as girls' education, and specific problems, such as HIV/AIDS, which are seen as important targets.

iii It is becoming increasingly clear that what is lacking in these increased efforts is a focus on the capacity and development of organisations, whether in government or civil society, to absorb and effectively utilise these increased funds. With the move to a more strategic level, donors are increasingly providing assistance in the form of finances but do not provide the technical support that is required to make the reforms that are necessary for the effective utilisation of this money. This problem is exacerbated in sub-Saharan Africa by HIV/AIDS, which is causing devastation among those with important skills and experience.

iv VSO is currently ideally placed to make a substantial contribution to the development efforts aimed at achieving the MDGs. VSO is:

- Working at the right level, between the field and government ministries, with local government and civil society and focused on organisational development;
- Responsive to the needs of genuine partners, working on an equal basis;

- Able to find the right kinds of people quickly and through an increasingly diverse recruiting system;
- Able to work in the right way to identify problems with partners, develop strategies to deal with these problems and see through the implementation of these strategies, and;
- Focused on two key areas where substantial efforts are currently required, namely education and HIV/AIDS.

Capacity Building and the Programmatic Approach

v VSO has been accused in the past of using a scatter-gun approach to development, being overly responsive to too wide a range of local 'partners', lacking focus in the work at the national and international levels and paying too little attention to professional support to volunteers in the field. In order to deal with these criticisms VSO has, over the period of the current PPA, been implementing a more programmatic approach to its work at a country level. The approach is described in more detail in the main text. The review has found that the programmatic approach is being effectively used to:

- Develop a greater focus on a smaller number of strategic partnerships;
- Give the work at the national level a tighter technical focus, and;
- Increase the impact of individual volunteers, country programmes and VSO's work internationally.

vi This process was begun with the focusing the country programmes on the objectives set out in VSO's strategic document, *Increasing the Impact*, with a focus on disadvantage and partnership. Country programme staff and VSOUK senior management have used the programmatic approach to focus country level work on a more limited and manageable number of strategic partnerships. This has enabled country programme staff to work with strategic partners on understanding key needs, developing relationships and making the commitment necessary to seeing through the strategies to deal with these needs.

vii The process has been continued with the implementation of VSO's current strategic document, *Focus for Change*. This has been used to give the programme a better technical focus, through a combination of building on areas where VSO has established technical competence and long-term experience, such as in education, with a response to specific needs and issues, such as HIV/AIDS. As the implementation is still in process, the review has found that these reforms have the potential for VSO to build up its own technical competence through the programme staff. This will allow the organisation to better support volunteers in the field as professionals, as can be seen through the closer involvement of volunteers in programme development. It will also enable VSO to be a more active learning organisation, collecting, analysing and disseminating experience in the field, across the organisation and more widely, as has already been seen through the successful RAISA programme and the work in education on *What Makes Teachers Tick?*

viii Both aspects of the use of the programmatic approach, the focus on strategic partnerships and the technical focus, have been effective in widening the impact of VSO's work at all levels. The programmatic approach increases the impact of individual volunteers through the longer-term commitment to strategic partners and the better support from programme staff. The approach has the potential to further

increase impact through the clustering of volunteers around partnerships and within programme objectives. The approach will also increased the impact of country programmes through improved linkages vertically, within programme objectives, and horizontally, between objectives, such as in the Ghana programme. More generally, a greater strategic focus has the potential to give a better understanding of what works and why.

ix Finally, it increases the impact of VSO's work internationally through a better understanding of the country programmes and their successes or otherwise. This better understanding has in turn given VSO the opportunity to make strategic contributions to make strategic contributions to work with partners in coalitions and campaigns in advocacy, policy-making and development awareness - What Makes Teacher's Tick, World Bank and Global Schools Partnership.

Contributions to Development Awareness

x This is an important area where it is possible to show that VSO is making careful use of limited resources to make a substantial contribution to the work in development awareness, mainly through partnerships with a range of organisations and coalitions. The PPA framework again has a narrow focus on a specific group of outcomes and fails to capture the wider and longer-term contribution that VSO makes through its network of returned volunteers. Like the network itself, where VSO is in contact with 17,000 of the total of 30,000 returned volunteers, VSO is able to capture some of this larger contribution itself using the limited resources currently available.

xi In the narrow terms of the PPA framework, VSO has made the following contributions to work in public awareness of global issues in the UK:

- Developed contacts with over half of the total number of returned volunteers;
- Built on long-standing work in global education;
- Developed important partnerships in advocacy, and;
- Made its own unique and individual contributions through a range of interesting media campaigns.

xii Returned volunteers (RVs) are seen by VSO, and by many other organisations, as very valuable potential resource for development awareness activities in the UK. As well as seeking to remain in contact with as many returned volunteers as possible, VSO has been active in providing opportunities for them to contribute to development awareness activities. There are now over 70 local groups across the UK, which provide support to volunteers and RVs and provide a base for local activities such as fund-raising, recruitment for VSO and a wide-range of innovative development awareness activities. VSO is also developing other opportunities such as the Teachers Network, the Advocacy Network and web-based resource RVs-Connected, to encourage the greater involvement of RVs. However, one general finding of the review is that volunteering through VSO has a significant impact on an individual's life, influencing attitudes, personal relationships, behaviour and career paths, all things that are difficult if not impossible to measure.

xiii VSO has supported and encouraged a relatively small Teachers Network since it was set up by RVs in 1994. VSO is now seeking to build on this small

resource through its involvement in the Global Schools Partnership, alongside the British Council, UKOWLA and CEF. Their main contribution to the partnership will be to provide a register of global educators, teachers who are experienced and are trained in global education, built on the Teachers Network resource. In addition VSO has been playing an active role in Enabling Effective Support network, working closely with LaSER-GD in the south-east and looking for other potential partners elsewhere in the UK.

xiv VSO has also sought to develop partnerships in advocacy work, through its membership of and active contributions to two important coalitions, the *Global Campaign for Education* and the Stop AIDS Campaign. VSO is a relatively recent member of the well-established Global Campaign for Education, but is seen as having an important role through the experience in education in the field and through the potential resource of the RVs. In the case of the *Stop AIDS* campaign, VSO played an active role in establishing the coalition and has already made a substantial contribution to the work of the campaign and to the openness of the group.

xv VSO also has made its own individual contribution through its interesting media work. VSO is able to maintain a high media profile for itself, through its regular recruiting drives and particularly through its media campaigns, such as the current Cultural Breakthrough campaign. VSO keeps a close watch on how effective this work is in reaching target audiences and in achieving campaign aims.

Learning, Dissemination and Monitoring and Evaluation

xvi M&E is the area where the most work is required by VSO over the remainder of the PPA and which should be an important focus in the new PPA. The current PPA framework is not an effective monitoring and evaluation tool: it is too narrowly focused on specific, quantitative targets and misses out on what is most innovative and interesting about the programme. Many of the necessary pieces are in place for good quality M&E, but VSO has struggled to bring them together. The review team considers that there is scope for developing an effective system for collating, analysing and disseminating learning across the organisation and more widely.

xvii The crucial level for good quality M&E is country programme level. Here the results of programmes can be assessed at the district or regional level in the first instance. Without good quality country programme information, corporate M&E information can only be *ad hoc*. Although quantitative data cannot be used meaningfully at the corporate level, never the less VSO can still demonstrate the role and contribution of volunteers – through qualitative analysis, and by making a distinction between the effectiveness of strategies to reach programme objectives, and impact. Suggestions have been made by the review about how VSO could improve the quality of M&E information and enhance M&E capacity (Section 5.3).

xviii The review supports continuing the focus on education and HIV/ AIDS in the next PPA, these are major and strategic areas of programme activity where VSP has a distinctive contribution to make, and an added value. Suggestions for the next PPA are made in Section 5.3.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 DFID has provided financial support to VSO since it was established in 1958. VSO was one of the recipients of the six block grants through which the ODA provided support to the major UK NGOs up to 1997. With the change to the DFID in 1997 there was a major review of links between the department and UK-based International NGOs, resulting in the Programme Partnership Agreements and the Civil Society Challenge Fund. The Programme Partnership Agreement (PPA) with VSO was the first agreement to be negotiated in 2000 and the first to be published in January 2001. A total of 15 PPAs have now been agreed: with ActionAid, ChristianAid, CAFOD, SC(UK), WWF, Oxfam, VSO, Skillshare Africa, CIIR, BESO and IS in a first round, and; with Care International, WaterAid, HelpAge International and ADD in a more recent second round. In terms of scale of funding the PPA with VSO is by far the largest agreement, constituting around 43% of the total PPA funds. In addition DFID funding has constituted approximately 75% of VSO's total budget.

1.2 Although the period of the current agreement has been relatively short, at three years, it has covered an important time for VSO. The PPA was negotiated during the final year of VSO's third global strategic plan, Increasing the Impact, with a focus on disadvantage and partnership. Preparations for the development of the third strategic plan, Focus for Change, were well underway and implementation of the plan was begun 2002. The current plan has a much greater technical focus on six specific goals, education, HIV/AIDS, disability, health and social wellbeing, secure livelihoods and participation and governance, to achieved through three main approaches empowerment, partnership and commitment to learning. The plan also re-emphasises VSO's commitment to international volunteering as being at the heart of the contribution to development. The period of the PPA has been important as well for the introduction of the programmatic approach, marking a considerable organisational shift from a volunteer sending organisation to an international development organisation.

1.3 There have been regular reviews of ODA/DFID support to VSO, carried out roughly every five years. The last review was carried out by Compass in 1997 and focused in the main on the institutional set up of the organisation, giving relatively little attention to the development outcomes. The current review was begun in January 2003, at a time when there were a number of serious questions being raised about the role of volunteers in development. Since the review was begun the emphasis within DFID and VSO has shifted somewhat, to looking more at direct comparisons between the outcomes of VSO's work and the outcomes of other organisations involved in international development, particularly with regard to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in 2015.

1.4 While the PPA M&E framework covers inputs from DFID, this aspect of the PPA was not covered in the ToR and therefore is not covered in the review. The full ToR are included in Annexe 1 and the methodology is included in Annexe 2. The review team recommend that these aspects of the

agreement be reviewed jointly by DFID and VSO before the end of the current PPA.

2 VOLUNTEERS IN DEVELOPMENT

2.1 VOLUNTEERING AND DEVELOPMENT

2.1.1 There has been increasing recognition of the importance of volunteering, both in the development of national policy and in research. Annexe 25 includes a list of literature used by the review. In the UK the Home Office has led the development of volunteering policy, through discussion documents¹. This sets out a policy of broad support and encouragement for volunteering, working in close partnership with government and the private sector, and it includes recognition of the importance of overseas volunteering. Policy is further developed through a Code of Good Practice², which sets out the roles and responsibilities of all of those involved in volunteering. This has been taken up by the UK government in the interdepartmental work to encourage recognition of the responsibilities, as well as the rights, of citizenship and the importance of a strong civil society under the broad heading of Active Citizenship.

2.1.1 Overall the research and discussion papers point to:

- A strong association between volunteering and value driven development, whether at home or internationally. High levels of personal commitment means volunteers commonly bring more than skills and experience to a job – in particular they bring long-term commitment to the welfare of others, and to social justice. It also means voluntary organizations and volunteer sending agencies usually work differently to government departments and the private sector, and the aims and working practices of such organizations are those of the volunteers, staff, partners (client groups) and trustees³.
- Volunteering building trust between citizens and social groups, and fostering collective action/ solidarity.
- The substantial size and contribution of the voluntary sector: the economic value of volunteering in Britain is estimated at UKL15 billion⁴.
- The importance of acknowledging and building on the role of volunteers in national development – that volunteering is an indicator of social capital⁵.

2.1.2 VSO's own contribution to this wider debate on the importance of volunteering is set out in the recently published position paper on the role of volunteers in international development⁶, see Annex 5. This is a clear restatement of the distinctive contribution that volunteers bring to international development and of the foundations on which VSO's work both internationally and nationally is built. The findings of the review support this position paper, and are discussed in sections 3 and 4.

¹ For example, Home Office, 2002. *Next Steps on Volunteering and Giving in the UK: A Discussion Document*. London: Home Office. www.homeoffice.gov.uk/docs/next-steps.pdf.

² Home Office. *Volunteering: A Code of Practice*. www.homeoffice.gov.uk/docs/goodprac.pdf

³ Home office *Next Steps*1.13.

⁴ Foreword of Home Office *Next Steps*.... Op cit.

⁵ Ellis, op cit, p. 2.4, UNV 2003. *Volunteerism and Capacity Development*, New York: UNV, p42, and UNV, 1999. A Background Paper for Discussion at an Expert Group Meeting, New York, November 29-30, 1999, paragraph 24..

⁶ VSO, 2002. *The Role of Volunteers in International Development: VSO Position Paper*. London: VSO.

Trends in International Volunteering

2.1.3 The review team looked at recent changes in SNV (The Netherlands), APSO (Ireland), and also at UN volunteering policy. The UN remains firmly committed to promoting and supporting national and international volunteering, and most volunteers work on UN programmes. APSO continues to support volunteers with INGOs, but no longer recruits volunteers for projects: recruitment was considered to be a replication of INGO recruitment. SNV is notable because it moved in 1985 from recruiting volunteers to recruiting experienced development professionals (national and international) to work with international donor programmes (Annexe 7).

2.1.4 Several features characterise volunteering in development with VSO, which put it in a unique position *vis a vis* volunteering in development with many other European agencies:

- VSO does not generally advertise for specific placements⁷, VSO recruits generically recognising the importance of the people skills that volunteers come with as well as the professional skills. VSO then matches candidates to placement descriptions as a continuous process.
- Volunteers are employed by local employers, not VSO, and paid a local salary⁸ so increasing partner ownership and equality.
- Volunteers⁹ live within the community they are working they are working rather than outside it.
- The active role of local groups of returned volunteers and supporters in supporting VSO as an organisation, and in promoting development issues locally.
- The contribution of volunteers to development awareness in the UK.

2.1.5 On the basis of the literature and the experience of the review team, it could be that VSO is a global leader in supporting volunteers facilitate partnerships and develop programmes, and also in facilitating the development experience of partners into international advocacy work and into development awareness work in the UK (see below, and sections 3 and 4). In addition VSO is supporting the development of national volunteering programmes in Ghana (Annexe 22) and The Philippines.

2.2 RECRUITMENT AND THE PROGRAMMATIC APPROACH

2.2.1 Country programmes make their requests to VSOUK, and through internationally shared systems supported by the London office, requests are forwarded to offices in Canada, Kenya, the Netherlands, and the Philippines.

Table 2.1 Volunteer numbers by recruitment centre

Recruitment centre	2002	2001
UK	376	629
Canada	69	82

⁷ For example CIIR, Skillshare and Concern Worldwide.

⁸ ICD (CIIR), SkillShare and VMM also pay local salaries.

⁹ ICD (CIIR), SkillShare and VMM volunteers also live in the community.

Kenya	36	41
Netherlands	81	78
Philippines	41	26
Total	603	856

2.2.2 The programmatic approach drives volunteer recruitment and matching (see Section 3). It takes 6-12 months from the time of receiving an initial request from a partner, through the joint assessment process of preparing a placement description, to placing a request with VSOUK, to the arrival of a volunteer. Placement fill rates vary between 65% and 75% in country programmes: this figure is a reflection of the high demand for VSO volunteers. All the same in 2002 there was a fall in interest, and a drop in recruitment from 856 to 603, which was attributed to global insecurity. However the UK recruitment situation has improved since, and overall volunteer departures are expected to be up by 150 in 2004.

Diversity in volunteers

2.2.3 Overall the proportion of UK recruited volunteers has dropped from 70% to 60% in the last few years. The number of south-to-south volunteers has been steadily increasing from 30 to 75 in 2003, and the figure is expected to reach 100 in 2004. VSO has shifted over the years to be a more international volunteer sending agency.

2.2.4 Highly specialist skills tend to be more difficult to recruit, and to address this VSO has been developing links with professional bodies and other organisations. Examples of this include:

- Link with Birmingham education department to allow teachers to be seconded to the Ethiopian and Malawi education programmes for 15 months, including an overlap of three months with serving volunteers for continuity.
- Links with a number of private sector companies, such as Accenture, have been developed into the VSO Business Partnership Initiative This provides volunteers, on secondment from their permanent jobs, who work for six to twelve months in capacity building roles, often as an early intervention with a partner overseas.
- VSO has Fellowships with the Royal Colleges of Paediatrics and Child Health; of Physicians and of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and with The Faculty of Public Health Medicine. A further partnership with the Royal College of Psychiatrists is being explored. Senior doctors recruited through these Fellowships are undertaking five years of Higher Specialist Training (HST) after which they are eligible to apply for consultancy posts. Placements with VSO under this scheme are for one year and can be accredited towards HST.

2.2.5 Some skills not easily found in the UK are more easily met through recruitment in Kenya and the Philippines.

2.2.6 About 4% of volunteers recruited in the UK come from ethnic minority backgrounds. VSO feels this is too low and is making strenuous efforts to increase the proportion. This is now reflected in much more inclusive recruitment literature and advertising. The effect of this effort can now be seen in increased percentages of applicants from ethnic minority backgrounds.

Table 2.2 Numbers of applications from people identified as Asian or African/Caribbean.

July 2000 - June 2001	265 (7.3% of applications where ethnicity is known)
July 2002 - June 2003	450 (12.1% of applications where ethnicity is known)

There has also been a steady increase in staff diversity. The proportion of those from ethnic minorities has increased from 11% to 15% in recent years.

2.2.7 Collecting disability statistics is notoriously difficult, but just under 1% of volunteers regard themselves as having a disability.

2.2.8 Diversity among volunteers in terms of nationality is very strong. As well as British, Dutch and Canadians there are substantial numbers of volunteers from

Kenya, Uganda and the Philippines coming through the new recruitment bases. The longer-established recruitment bases also have increasing numbers of applicants from neighbouring countries and volunteers of most nationalities within the present European Community are now serving overseas with VSO. In Ethiopia there are currently volunteers of 12 nationalities serving.

South-to-South Volunteering

2.2.9 The review found that partner organisations strongly supported the inclusion of south-south volunteering, because it shifts the emphasis of capacity building support coming solely from the north, to including the valuable contribution of expertise from other southern countries. For partners south-south volunteering represented more genuine international solidarity, and it made available skills that are not easily found in the north – particularly in HIV/ AIDS prevention and care, micro-finance and credit and tropical agriculture/natural resource management. Therefore south-south volunteering makes available skills needed to deliver the development goals, which would not easily otherwise be available.

2.2.10 The relatively small numbers of south-south volunteers (expected to be 100 in 2004) do not represent a significant loss of development expertise in their home countries. More over it was apparent to the review team that most south-south volunteers view volunteering as an important career step in development, most returning home after their placement.

2.2.11 Other country offices have successfully adopted and adapted the assessment process, which is summarised in Annexe 6. Since 1982 VSO has assessed volunteers for UNV, and in addition a number of organisations have asked to observe VSO's assessment processes, these include NGOs and national volunteering organisations. The review team attended an assessment day and it was particularly impressed with the emphasis on assessing personal qualities, facilitation and teamwork skills in candidates.

Volunteer Retention

2.2.12 In-country professional support structures and mechanisms include:

- Ongoing learning support provided through the *Volzone* site on the VSO website, which volunteers have access to through country programme offices.
- Various professional support networks exist in country programmes, which are organised by development goal programme, and country programmes hold annual volunteer conferences/ meetings.
- Support from increased numbers of professional programme staff, and volunteer involvement in programme development.

2.3 COST- EFFECTIVENESS

2.3.1 Overall the evidence points to increasing cost-effectiveness through the programmatic approach. Assessing cost-effectiveness requires a distinction to be made between a) volunteer unit costs and the role of volunteers in development, and b) the cost-effectiveness of the programmatic

approach. Both points of comparison – volunteers in development and the programmatic approach - need to be made with different delivery mechanisms and comparable results.

2.3.2 Partners in Bangladesh identified other delivery mechanisms as grants (for organisations to buy in skills/ capacity), local salaried personnel, consultancy support and technical cooperation assistance. A summary of this comparative analysis by Bangladesh partners is presented in Annexe 10. Partners in Bangladesh considered volunteers a cost-effective way of achieving the results they wanted: that they fill a significant gap between the needs of the NGO sector and the donor driven agenda supplied by consultants; their commitment means that they work as colleagues, and there is equality in the relationship through the payment of a local salary. In the Care – VSO Partner Capacity Building Initiative the salary of volunteers is met by the Care Bangladesh programme (see Section 3).

2.3.3 In Ghana the coherency and strong focus of the education and disability programmes provide a clear example of the role of volunteers in building the country education and disability programmes, and the cost-effectiveness of the programmatic approach. Here cost-effectiveness at programme level is derived in the education programme from split placements (combining teaching and capacity building at district level) and in the disability programme from the 'web' of partnerships. The strategic common interest of a discrete social group – equality - provides an enabling environment for the programmatic approach in the disability development goal. The education sector in many countries does not necessarily provide a responsive environment to promote change in, and Ghana is a good example of how long standing relationships with district education offices are evolving slowly into a different type of partnership – based on a capacity building input by volunteers (see Section 3 and Annexe 10).

2.3.4 Other examples of increasing the cost-effectiveness of volunteers through the programmatic approach, and by implication building partnerships, include:

- Volunteer facilitation of the participatory processes with country partners, which design, plan and monitor programmes.
- The meeting of total unit costs of up to 23 volunteers by the MoE in Ethiopia in the MoE – VSOE partnership.

2.3.5 A full cost-effectiveness analysis was not practical in the review time frame, and because of the difficulty of getting comparable financial information from other organisations. However a full economic analysis could not fully take into account the high level of commitment and the value of the skills which volunteers bring to the development process, and which are most valued by partners. Annexe 8.2 provides information on volunteer unit costs. In the view of the review team these costs are extremely reasonable given the economic contribution of volunteers, and their partners.

2.4 PARTNERSHIP BUILDING

2.4.1 Partnership building is at the core of the programmatic approach, and volunteers are at the heart of VSO partnerships, with an emphasis on one-to-one relationships and on the long-term nature of these relationships. Also important is the two way process of learning and sharing, between volunteer and organisation, and by extension between the VSO country programme and its partners. These relationships and the process of learning in turn contribute to the equality of relationships between VSO country programmes and partners.

2.4.2 The actual partner and the nature of the partnership are factors responsible for the programmatic approach developing faster in some goals than others – most notably where partners are NGOs. For example programmes are well established in Bangladesh in the participation and governance goal (Annexe 21), and in Ghana in the disability programme where partners are organisations of the disabled (Annexe 22). Both these country development goal programmes are well established, and working at various levels of partnership.

- In Bangladesh the Care – VSO Partner Capacity Building Initiative is an example of a partnership with a UK NGO directed at strengthening the organisational and networking capacity of Care Bangladesh and VSOB partners in the northern western districts.
- The Ghana disability programme has a national level focus through the organisational strengthening/ capacity building placements in national partner NGOs, and through funding the multi-stakeholder Disability Network. This national focus is linked to the district and community level work of partner NGOs and the inclusive education pilot project of the Special Education Division of the Ghana Education Service, another partner. This is illustrative of the advantages of a web of inter-relating partnerships.

2.4.3 In contrast the programmatic approach is taking longer to develop in country education programmes. This is partly because of the sheer size of many programmes (up to 97 volunteers, see Annexe 11), and partly because the major partner is a government department, which is often unable or reluctant to adapt quickly to a widely held view of a need for change. Long-standing partners have traditionally seen VSO as a service provider, and VSO can only adapt its role if it can convince such partners that it can perform effectively in new roles. This is challenging for VSO, but it is the local presence, time and effort that VSO country programmes put into building and maintaining relationships that put them in a strong position to work with education departments to improve the quality of education for the poor. Therefore while it will take longer to see significant (measurable) impact at programme level¹⁰, the early years of building a different relationship with education departments (for example when moving from serial teaching placements to more capacity building type placements) are crucial to the future quality of the partnership, and to results and impact. While progress in terms of sustainable results is inevitably slower in education programmes, the review team believes that VSO country programmes are in a unique position

¹⁰ The review team believes that a ten-year education programme is a realistic time frame for achieving sustainable changes, and improvements in the quality of education.

to build successful partnerships with education departments, which will result in sustainable improvements in education.

Overall findings

2.4.4 The fact that VSO is not a funding organisation, but an organisation that recruits volunteers in response to partners' requests, and because it is not automatically associated by partners with access to funding, means there are qualitative differences in the process of partnership development, and the nature of its partnerships. There is generally greater equality in VSO partnerships compared to partnerships between northern and southern NGOs, which are based on a funding arrangement, and in which northern NGOs are accountable to donors, and therefore have control in the partnership through the funding arrangement.

2.4.5 During the review the team identified following steps in partnership building in VSO's programmatic approach, these are summarised in Annexe 9. Overall partnership in the programmatic approach is characterised by:

- An emphasis on partners, rather than projects.
- Putting the process of relationship building first in a partnership, out of which the strategic objective/ purpose of a programme and placement materialise.
- Long-term partnerships.
- The fact that partnerships are generally not led by funding processes and donors' demands of accountability (except perhaps inevitably in large externally funded projects). Volunteers are locally employed¹¹ on local salaries, and the review team found that partners respected this arrangement for its 'equity through salary', and its accountability. When partners compared the merits of a volunteer *vis a vis* a grant of UKL22,000¹² (Annexe 10), the strong comparative advantages of a volunteer included loyalty to the partner and flexibility.
- Partnership at two levels, a) at the country programme level of working together towards shared goals, and b) at placement level whereby volunteers and partners work towards shared strategic objectives/ purposes. The latter is what makes VSO's approach to partnership building distinctive.

2.5 ISSUES RAISED BY THE REVIEW

2.5.1 VSO asked the review team for suggestions of indicators of effective partnerships. Broad suggestions are presented below: the review team would like to stress that these broad indicators are used to start discussion:

- Mutual respect and trust, and understanding of roles, relationships and responsibilities.
- Regular and effective communications.
- Effective decisions.
- Difficult issues dealt with satisfactorily.

¹¹ Even when a salary and accommodation costs are met by VSO, the partner is considered the 'employer'.

¹² Focus discussion groups in Bangladesh and Ghana.

- Communities, clients and other stakeholders recognise the partnership for its collective value.
- Effective synergies – demonstrating that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

2.5.2 More specific indicators should be developed jointly with partners at country level. It is also strongly recommended that each programme-monitoring framework should include an outcome/ output related to partnerships. How more specific indicators could be developed is discussed in Section 5 on monitoring and evaluation.

3 OUTCOME 1 - CAPACITY BUILDING

3.1 OVERVIEW OF COUNTRY PROGRAMMES

Progress in the Implementation of the Programmatic Approach

3.1.1 Over the past three years VSO has been moving from a volunteer centric approach to a programmatic approach, and establishing itself as a development organisation, and overall it has made considerable progress in the implementation of the programmatic approach. The continued demand from both partners and donors for the resources that VSO can provide highlights the role of volunteers in development. It seems likely that the programmatic approach will enhance the effectiveness of individual placements and, through the strategic focus, will contribute to long-term change.

3.1.2 The essential poverty reduction strategies of country programmes lie in the goals. Annexe 11 provides data on volunteer activity by country and by primary development goal, which presents a instant picture of what sectors country programmes are working in. These figures are a rough guide only, because for example where HIV/ AIDS prevention is being mainstreamed through all placements there are many more volunteers actually contributing to the HIV/ AIDS development goal. There is also some overlap between the service delivery and organisational capacity building categories.

Table 3.1: Placement numbers by development goal (31st March, 2003)

Development Goal	Number placements working primarily in that goal	Percentage
Education	689	48%
HIV/ AIDS	109	7%
Disability	71	5%
Health and social well being	170	12%
Secure livelihoods	242	17%
Participation and governance	93	6%
Total number of volunteers	1419	100%
Number of placements contributing to a development goal	1374	97%

3.1.3 Goals have been selected, and strategies for their delivery decided in consultation with partners and wider stakeholders, and commonly using participatory analysis processes. The review team observed this process in Bangladesh (participation and governance goal) and Ghana (education goal). It also observed and appreciated a high level of ‘people’ skills. ‘People’ skills are vital in building and maintaining partnerships. Programme development brings the commitment to sustaining relationships in the long term, which is vital for identifying problems and solutions and for seeing the solutions through.

3.1.4 An overview of, and the findings on the education and HIV/ AIDS goals, are discussed below. Work in the disability development goal was included in the Ghana review visit, and because in some ways the programmatic approach is more developed in the disability sector, a overview of work in the disability sector is included in Annexe 16. Disability programmes are working with national NGOs, and partnerships can be developed more quickly with NGOs, than with government departments. The Kenya and Ghana disability programmes are both working with national NGOs, which have strong partnerships are district level, and these programmes are illustrative of effective ‘webs’ of partnerships. The Kenya disability programme has played a leading role in ensuring the inclusion of the rights of disabled persons in the Kenya Draft Constitution Bill.

3.1.5 Therefore the speed with which the programmatic approach is developing varies between development goal, with the policy and implementation environment, and with the type of partner. At country programme level progress has been quicker in Bangladesh because partners are predominantly NGOs and slower in Ghana where the major partner is a government department, the Ghana Education Service (GES). In addition the time – between 6 and 12 months - between a request from a partner for a volunteer and start of employment and the time delay caused by the length of time it takes to complete a placement (predominantly two years) also influence the pace of the programmatic approach.

3.2 ENHANCING THE CAPACITY OF ORGANISATIONS IN THE SOUTH

3.2.1 Directly or indirectly all placements have a capacity building role, the crucial issue is how this leads to sustainable improvements in the performance of partner organisations, and whether there is evidence of improved performance which will contribute to the achievement of the goals.

3.2.2 The review observed at first hand the capacity building work with partners in Bangladesh and Ghana, particularly in the education, disability and participation and governance goals. Overall the strategies being used to strengthen the capacity of partners are developmentally sound and accepted good practice. The review focused on the education and HIV/ AIDS goals (as required by the PPA), and a more detailed discussion on performance in capacity building in these areas follows below.

3.2.3 Capacity building strategies include:

- Professional, technical and managerial assistance.
- Strengthening service delivery systems.
- Working with national or regional level organisations at the centre of a network.
- Supporting national level and sector networks.
- Working with national membership organisations, with district branches or linkages (e.g. organisations of the disabled).
- Working with non-placement partners (e.g. in HIV/ AIDS programmes).
- Strengthening national frameworks, e.g. national policy and supportive legal frameworks.
- In education, the development of split placements – combining teaching with a district based education capacity building role.
- Pooling volunteer expertise (e.g. a group of volunteers with complimentary skills are available to partners).
- Partnership building (see below).

3.2.4 Table 3.2 below presents VSO's categorisation of volunteer roles in capacity building, and the number of placements per role. These figures are indicative only, because of overlaps between categories. Although there is no baseline information to compare the figures against, anecdotal evidence and the observations of the review team point to a shift towards organisational and institutional development roles (although some of these also encompass a service delivery role to ensure they are effective).

Table 3.2: Placements and capacity building at 31st March, 2003

	Number of placements	Percentage
Service delivery	572	40%
Strengthening individual capabilities	841	59%
Organisational capacity building	639	45%
Institutional development	255	18%
Total number of volunteers	1419	

3.2.5 The process by which the review built up the evidence of capacity building in the outcome 1 grids (annexes 14, 15 and 16) is in itself instructive of the problem in assessing the effectiveness of the capacity building work: reviews and reports lean towards description and activity monitoring rather

than results monitoring. The grids in were gradually built up through a process of trawling documents by the review team and VSOUK staff, and by VSOUK staff, checking the results of activities with country programme staff. The results of this process strongly indicate that the poor quality of reports and reviews does not necessarily reflect the higher quality of programmes on the ground. At the same time however, in general the information on results that was forthcoming, is not based on an analysis of whether results are sustainable improvements in performance.

3.3 ISSUES RAISED BY THE REVIEW

3.3.1 Overall, therefore, considerable progress has been made in the implementation of the programmatic approach and in supporting partners to strengthen their capacity to deliver development. However the review team identified two closely related areas of concern:

- M&E needs to be more systematic to allow country programmes to how effective programmes are in improving organisational or institutional performance, and thereby their contribution to poverty impact, at least qualitatively. The capacity building strategies are accepted good practice, but nevertheless evidence of effectiveness and impact is required by the PPA and will in some sectors (for example education) help sell to the idea of change to improve quality.
- M&E capacity of country programme offices. See section 3.

3.4 EDUCATION GOAL

3.4.1 VSO has over 40 years experience of placing volunteer teachers and other education professionals. Over the years the proportion of volunteer placements in education has declined e.g. in 2001 57% volunteers were predominantly working towards education goals as compared to 48% in 2003. Historically these have been predominately teaching placements, but since the CSP1 process, and especially with the strategic planning process for *Focus for Change*, the number of non-teaching placements is steadily increasing. These non-teaching placements are directed at improving standards of teaching (for example in-service training and teacher training college placements); improving education management capacity (for example at district level) and improving enrolment and retention, in particular of the girl child.

3.4.2 The bedrock of many country programmes has been in education, teaching placements. Country programmes with large education programmes¹³ include Ghana, Ethiopia, Zambia, Malawi, Rwanda, Papua New Guinea, China, Laos, Nepal and Vietnam. The programme experience of partners in Zambia, Malawi and Papua New Guinea fed into the Valuing Teachers research-based advocacy project (see Advocacy campaign below).

3.4.3 A singularly notable achievement is the funding by the MoE in Ethiopia (Annexes 14 and 23.1) of a Higher Diploma in teacher education. This represents a massive vote of confidence in VSO in Ethiopia, and the capacity of VSO to recruit the expertise required by its partners.

¹³ Where education is the largest development goal in terms of placement numbers.

3.4.4 The education programme in Ghana is illustrative of how the type of placement is changing in order to deliver the education goal. Seven objectives have been identified by partners and reflect the priorities of the MoE, schools and communities, and they fit closely with the DFID CAP and the PRS for Ghana. Each placement job description must address at least one of the first five objectives, plus the sixth. Head teachers are expected to agree to volunteer addressing at least two objectives (one from i-v, and vi), in addition to teaching. The Ghana Volunteer Programme with the National Service Scheme is addressing objective iii.

3.4.5 Education objectives in the Ghana programme:

- i. Improve literacy and numeracy of pupils at basic schools in the focus districts through in-service teacher support and training.
- ii. Strengthen the capacity of GES staff and head teachers to establish and implement a functional support and monitoring system in order to improve professionalism.
- iii. Identify innovative ways of improving teacher supply in second cycle schools.
- iv. Identify ways to improve the enrolment and retention of girls in the focus districts.
- v. Encourage community involvement in the development of education in the focus districts.

Cross-cutting theme:

- vi. Reduce the spread of HIV/ AIDS infection and mitigate the impact of AIDS.

3.4.6 The above objectives, and the split placements, together with targeting seven districts in northern Ghana where disadvantage in education and poverty are greater, illustrate how the programmatic approach is developing at country level.

3.4.7 Annexe 14, Progress Towards the Education Development Goal, uses the PPA M&E framework to present examples of achievements. Six countries were selected for material – Cambodia, Laos, Ethiopia, Gambia, Zambia and Ghana. Education programmes in Cambodia, Ethiopia, Laos and Gambia are more developed, and, Zambia and Ghana have made important advances in the development of a programme (in particular in building relationships with district offices).

Overall findings

3.4.8

1. Education is a distinctive area of competency for VSO. Its credibility with partners and donors is derived from its long history of placing teachers, and its advocacy work, (see Section 4).
2. VSO is fast moving away from serial placements in schools, where one volunteer can automatically follow another. Clearly in many remote rural areas there is a real teacher shortage, particularly in maths and science, but placing volunteers in chronically under staffed schools, 'gap filling', without addressing the fundamental cause of the teacher shortage risks undermining

the programmatic approach. As illustrated by the Ghana example VSO is building on its reputation to engage at higher levels - district, regional or national - in order to ensure that programmes address the causes of educational disadvantage, and the quality of education. Improvements in quality are vital if retention rates are to increase, and the MDGs are to be met. Spilt placements (between a capacity building role at district level and a teaching post) are an innovative way of addressing this and establishing new partnerships with respective MoE.

3. The most strategic entry point for VSO education programmes appears to be at the middle level - regional, provincial or district - office of the MoE. Generally there is greater flexibility for introducing what may be, to the MoE, new ideas or innovatory practices. Overall more developed education programmes are characterised by active partnerships with the local MoE office and other education service delivery organisations, and placements exist at national, regional/ district level as well as at school level.
4. The review team supports the way in which education programmes are developing in partnership with MoE, and their objectives, which are in line with DFID and other donors' objectives, and are contributing towards the achievement of the MDGs.

3.5 ISSUES RAISED BY THE REVIEW

3.5.1 The capacity building outcome (1) of the PPA M&E framework "*significant numbers of organisations*" is not met. The success criteria at purpose level. But education programme reports and reviews are not sufficiently consistent across programmes to:

1. Allow an analysis of the effectiveness of the programmatic approach in terms of improved capacity in education or,
2. Allow a comparative analysis of how programmes are developing across countries.

3.6 HIV/ AIDS GOAL

3.6.1 VSO has been placing volunteers in specific HIV/ AIDS placements since the late 1990's. However many volunteers working in health were working in HIV/ AIDS prevention/ care and care before placements were routinely designated as for the HIV/ AIDS development goal.

3.6.2 VSO has also successfully raised donor funds for HIV/ AIDS prevention/ care and care projects in Southern Africa (RAISA), Kiribati and Vanuatu, Nigeria and Ethiopia – mostly from DFID country offices. These are presented below. Another proposal, for Papua New Guinea, is pending a decision from the EC.

Table 3.6: Donor funded HIV/ AIDS programmes, 2001-2002

Country	Title	Donor	Contract Amount	Year Approved
Namibia, Mozambique, Malawi, South Africa, Zimbabwe and Zambia	RAISA: Regional HIV/ AIDS Initiative of Southern Africa	DFID South Africa Community Fund PSO (Netherlands)	1,200,000 567,658 279,706	2001
Nigeria	HIV/ AIDS Programme	DFID Nigeria	900,000	2003
Ethiopia	HIV/ AIDS Programme	DFID Ethiopia	340,794	2002
Ghana	Adolescent Sexual Reproductive Health	Africa Youth Alliance	108,450	2003
Kiribati and Vanuatu	HIV/ AIDS Programme	DFID Pacific	143,548	2002
		Total	3,540,156	

3.6.3 The largest project is RAISA, which is also VSO's flagship HIV/ AIDS project. As a regional programme, it has provided the largest single entry point to a regional programme – addressing an issue, which is the largest single development concern in southern Africa. A review based on case studies¹⁴ was undertaken in January 2003 and an output to purpose review¹⁵ was undertaken in May 2003, the design features of the RAISA programme are summarised below.

- The purpose of RAISA is to strengthen the capacity of organisations of civil society and the government sector to develop sustainable approaches to minimise the spread of HIV an AIDS and to mitigate the impact of HIV and AIDS.
- RAISA selectively focuses on partner organisations: organisations that have, or recently have had, a volunteer.
- With 76 partners in RAISA, it is a complex programme composed of large initiatives, and equally importantly a myriad of very small initiatives. A basic premise of the programme has been that no HIV/ AIDS integration effort is too small or informal that it is insignificant: that

¹⁴ VSO, 2003. Building Capacity in times of HIV & AIDS: A review based on case studies of VSO's RAISA programme in southern Africa.

progress reducing infection rates will result from the small efforts of large numbers of people – everyone.

- RAISA introduced the mainstreaming of HIV/ AIDS prevention/ care into other volunteer placements.

3.6.4 RAISA has informed the design of HIV/ AIDS programmes in other countries, including Ghana, which was visited as part of the review (Annexe 22). Below is a summary of the main design features of the Ghana HIV/ AIDS programme, which is mainstreaming HIV/ AIDS prevention in placement schools, and through the AYA funded programme seeking to establish HIV/ AIDS prevention activities in non-placement schools.

- The major geographical focus of the programme is in the Upper West Region where it works with placement and non-placement schools, and to a lesser extent the Upper East Region where it works only in placement schools.
- Activities in the Upper West Region of the country, and the posts of HIV/ AIDS project coordinator and HIV/ AIDS resource person, are funded by AYA. The AYA programme is currently implemented in 20 (non-placement) schools, including two special schools for the blind and the deaf, and the University of Development Studies campus at Wa, and by the end of 2004 it will be active in up to 40 schools.
- While three placements are specifically in the HIV/ AIDS development goal¹⁶ area, in addition eight teacher volunteers are active in awareness raising and behavioural change communication activities. The HIV/ AIDS resource person volunteer has only been in post for three months, and in time all volunteer teachers (approximately 32) will be contributing to this cross cutting theme, and the overall VSO development goal.
- GES is responsible for the formal curriculum aspects of the AYA programme, but VSOG believes that a lack of confidence amongst teachers to talk about sexual behaviour in front of pupils, and a lack of capacity in GES to effectively support teachers in this role will undermine the potential of the AYA programme to deliver sustainable outcomes in schools. To address this at the local level the HIV/ AIDS resource person is working with clusters of schools, and providing skills and confidence training/ support for two teachers from each school to develop extra-curricula activities. The institutionalisation of extra-curricula activities in schools, will take time (several placement periods) and additional donor funding.
- VSOG worked with deaf communities and the British Council to produce a short video 'Protect Yourself' promoting HIV/ AIDS awareness, which was shown on Ghanaian TV every night before the news for several weeks at the time of the review, and is now being rolled out to all countries in Africa by the British Council.

Overall findings

¹⁶ The HIV/ AIDS goal is to combat stigma, support prevention, and increase the availability of treatment, care and support for those infected and affected by the HIV/ AIDS pandemic.

3.6.5 Main findings:

1. RAISA is well designed, with a clear purpose, and the review believes it has an important contribution to make to preventing the spread of HIV and mitigating the impact of AIDS. VSO has played a useful role in co-ordinating, lesson sharing, networking and bringing together agencies, including government and NGOs/ CBOs, around key issues.
2. Through RAISA and other programmes VSO has developed:
 - Innovative ways of mainstreaming HIV/ AIDS prevention/ care activities in different types of placements, especially in teaching/ education. Responses have been developed that can be integrated into a variety of sectors using basic developmental approaches.
 - A variety of ways of working with NGOs, through placements and non-placement capacity building work, which other organisations supporting NGOs/ CBOs in HIV/ AIDS prevention and care could find useful.
 - Participatory processes in placement identification and M&E – in HIV/ AIDS development goal placements and in other development goal placements.
3. Overall good progress has been made in integrating HIV/ AIDS prevention/ care activities in volunteer placements in the RAISA countries, Ethiopia and Ghana.
4. Approaches in the HIV/ AIDS development goal sector are necessarily and qualitatively different from approaches education development goal. The HIV/ AIDS sector is heavily populated by NGOs/ CBOs, and donor funding is readily available. The space and urgency exists for programmes and innovative approaches to be quickly developed and implemented. Such space and urgency allows VSO and other organisations to 'get up and go', and is in strong contrast to the fact that most education country programmes can realistically shift only slowly to include placements in more strategic, capacity building, roles at district or national level as well as schools.
5. A distinctive feature, and specific area of competency for VSO, in RAISA and other development goal programmes with NGOs/ CBOs is the role of volunteers in partnerships, see Partnership Building below.

3.7 ISSUES RAISED BY THE REVIEW

3.7.1 The capacity building outcome (1) of the PPA M&E framework "*significant numbers of organisations with increased capacity to deliver improved quality of services in HIV/ AIDS*", is key to combating stigma, supporting prevention and increasing the availability of treatment, care and support - the success criteria at purpose level.

1. But the logical framework for RAISA is broad and does not provide easily measured indicators of effectiveness. It does not address the key issue of whether the capacity of partner organisations to respond to the pandemic has been enhanced as a result of the project.
2. The absence of systematic M&E in organisational development/ strengthening means it is difficult to ascertain the sustainability of improvements in organisational performance, and whether they will lead to the achievement of the goal – a decrease in the rate of new HIV/AIDS infection by encouraging behavioural change.

3.7.2 The comparison of the education and the HIV/ AIDS information made available to the review team (which we assume is representative of the wider information available) supports the recommendation that logical framework thinking is used to conceptualise and measure outputs, outcomes and impacts, and that a logical framework matrix should be developed for each development goal in each country. It is important that the indicators/ success criteria are able to assess improved performance and the impact of improved performance (for example in reducing HIV infection rates and in increasing the quality of education).

4 OUTCOME 2 - DEVELOPMENT AWARENESS

4.1 OVERALL PROGRESS

4.1.1 Since it was established in 1958 one of VSO's greatest resources has been its returned volunteers (RVs). Many RVs have maintained an interest in VSO and have made contributions to the development of the organisation in terms of general support and fund-raising. Large numbers of RVs have made and continue to make significant, if unmeasured, contributions to work in international development in the UK, particularly through support to other development organisations and development awareness work. RVs are to be found making substantial voluntary contributions to development work in areas such as linking programmes, fair trade campaigns, and campaigns for international solidarity and political support. Perhaps most importantly many RVs have seen international volunteering through VSO as a route into professional work in international development. An examination of most UK based INGOs, and indeed DFID, would find many individuals who started or changed their careers through VSO.

4.1.2 In the last few years VSO has made considerable efforts to formalise and build on many of these more informal contributions. These efforts have been focused on work with returned volunteers, activities in global education and advocacy and media campaigns, described in more detail below. VSO have been keen to maintain the value of these informal approaches through offering RVs opportunities and choice rather than enforcing contributions. One of the major limitations in this aspect of VSO's work has been the availability of resources. VSO has been reluctant to allocate resources away from the overseas programme to relatively unproven work in the UK and so resources have generally been sought from other sources. Although the scale of resources invested has been relatively small when looked at in terms of VSO's international programme, the returns have already been considerable.

4.1.3 One of the main problems faced in the work in development awareness has been in assessing the impact of the interventions. The success criteria set out in the PPA framework are rather general and are likely to present problems of attribution. The difficulties will be in finding ways of making assessments of impact that are both quantitative and qualitative. This is an issue that will be returned to at the end of this section.

4.2 WORK WITH RETURNED VOLUNTEERS

4.2.1 One of the main areas where VSO has made substantial progress in the last few years is in developing and maintaining links with the very large network of past RVs. VSO has now made contact with 17,000 of the total of 30,000 RVs and maintains records of where these RVs worked as volunteers and where they are now based. In addition VSO has developed records of eminent RVs now working in senior positions in the private sector, government, education, health and the media. As well as directly contacting RVs VSO has recently set up RVs Connected, an internet based resource along the lines of Friend Reunited, to help those who wish to directly contact fellow volunteers or current volunteers working in placements.

4.2.2 RVs are supported on their return in a number of ways to help with resettlement and to provide them with opportunities to stay involved in the longer term. VSO provides direct support to recent RVs to help in the personal and professional sides of resettlement on return, through Returned Volunteer Weekends and through on-line support. The Returned Volunteer Weekends are used to provide information on the development of the VSO programme and the role of volunteers, on wider international development issues and on the kinds of ways in which RVs can stay involved, both with VSO and more widely. In addition to this direct support VSO encourages the development of local groups, many of which provide various forms of support to volunteers in placement and RVs. There are regular VSO Supporters' Conferences that aim to bring together local groups, RVs, supporters and partners to look at similar issues.

4.2.3 One long-standing means of maintaining links between RVs and VSO has been through the Local Groups. There are currently around 70 Local Groups spread across the UK and the contact details and in some cases websites are available through the VSO website. VSO Local Groups consist of RVs, general supporters and other partners, the mix depending on the local area. The review team met with the members of four local groups in Edinburgh, Newcastle, West London and Chichester - summaries of the key points from these meetings in Annexe A24. Local Groups are involved in a wide range of activities, such as: supporting Regional Officers in information dissemination and recruitment of potential volunteers; providing support for volunteers while in placement and for recent RVs; awareness raising about VSO, fund-raising and other forms of support; general development awareness activities through work in schools, local exhibitions, talks and discussions, and local media work.

4.2.4 More recently VSO has sought to develop other opportunities for RVs to make a contribution to development awareness work through support to the development of the Teachers Network and an Advocacy Network. The Teachers Network was established in 1994 by a group of science teachers who had been volunteers and wished to exchange information on resources developed. The network now has over 400 members and VSO provides support in the form of a regular newsletter and access to training. There are plans to develop the role of the Teachers Network further through the Global Schools Partnership, which is discussed below. The Advocacy Network has

been set up more recently and aims to encourage RVs to participate in advocacy campaigns that VSO is involved in with a range of partners.

4.2.5 As is noted above VSO has developed and is maintaining records of a substantial proportion of RVs. VSO has used these records and other contacts to begin to look at the impact of the work of RVs. For example in the case of Ghana Returned Volunteers, VSO has recently contacted a sample of 40 RVs to ask them about what links they still maintain with the country. There are plans to carry out a much more wide-ranging survey of RVs in the next year in order to report on the PPA framework. In addition VSO collects a range of information on the activities of Local Groups and regularly assesses the involvement of RVs in advocacy campaigns.

4.3 GLOBAL EDUCATION

4.3.1 VSO has had a long-standing involvement in education in many of its overseas programmes. Many RVs in education have remained in the education sector in UK and have been keen to continue to make a contribution to global education work. This enthusiasm resulted in the development of the Teachers Network, which is described above. In order to support this network and individual teachers interested in global education, VSO developed a training course entitled Supporting Teachers As Global Educators (STAGE). 65 participants took part in the various courses organised aimed at helping teachers incorporate global education into their everyday teaching.

4.3.2 VSO is now aiming to build on these individual efforts by developing partnerships with a range of other players in the field. Over the last few years VSO has been working with individual Development Education Centres that have expressed an interest and through them with the Enabling Effective Support programme. For example, VSO has played an active role in the development of the London and South East Regions - Global Dimension agreement and plans for the next five years. The plans aim to bring together and make more accessible the range of resources available in the area for development education and the global dimension in schools. VSO's main contribution will be through providing contacts with members of the Teachers Network and other RVs who could provide support to teachers and schools.

4.3.4 A more concrete achievement has been VSO's involvement in the successful bid to manage the Global Schools Partnership funded by DFID. The bid was led by the British Council who managed a previous North-South School Linking programme. The current programme is to be managed by The British Council, in partnership with VSO, the UK One World Linking Association and Cambridge Education Foundation. VSO's role in the programme will be to provide a global educators' register, based on the Teachers Network, to provide schools involved in linking with trained teachers to support these links.

4.3.5 The monitoring and evaluation of these activities will be carried out by the consortiums involved. VSO's role will be to assess their own contributions to these joint activities.

4.4 ADVOCACY AND MEDIA CAMPAIGNS

Education Advocacy

4.4.1 VSO is a member of the Global Campaign for Education (GCE), a worldwide alliance of NGOs, teachers unions and child rights activists¹⁷ lobbying for immediate action on the Education For All (EFA) goals¹⁸. Annexe 19 provides a summary of GCE.

4.4.2 VSO's particular contribution to the campaign has been:

- As a professional organisation with a good understanding of teaching and delivering capacity-building based on the field experience of volunteers and with direct links to governments in both the north and the south
- Returned Volunteers, who are active in campaigning and who are a huge potential resource base for engaging with multinationals and parliamentarians.

4.4.3 The Valuing Teachers advocacy campaign draws on VSOs' vast experience of working with national teachers and of delivering education in schools: experience that has highlighted the implications of the loss of morale and motivation amongst national teachers for the quality of education in many countries.

4.4.4 The role of volunteers in this research-based advocacy has been to:

- Witness, experience and communicate the idea to VSO and national and international stakeholders that declining national teacher morale and motivation is a key constraint to improving the quality of education.
- Conduct the research in response to the goals set for achieving EFA. Most of the schools that participated in the research, through focus discussion groups, had a volunteer at the time of the research (2002). In addition semi-structured interviews were held with representatives of ministries of education, donors and unions, and round table discussions held with groups of stakeholder representatives.
- Identify opportunities for dialogue between each country programme and national stakeholders in order to influence changes in policy and practice that will improve the quality of education, in particular teacher motivation and performance.
- Through the above to inform the VSO international policy report *What makes teachers tick?* and through this to generate new advocacy alliances in the north, with for example the World Bank.

Linking the education programme with development awareness in the UK

4.4.5 Education advocacy and development awareness in the UK are linked into each other as can be seen in Annexe 17. Valuing Teachers is an example

¹⁷ The 41 members of GCE include ActionAid Alliance; African Network Campaign on Education For All; Body Shop; CAMFED, Oxfam International; Save the Children Alliance, World Vision International, and various national NGOs.

¹⁸ Dakar, Senegal 2000 and Jomtein, Thailand 1990. The Dakar Framework for Action highlighted the crucial role of teacher contributions to sustainable achievements in the quality of education.

of a unified approach to advocacy in the north and in the south, around a shared issue – declining teacher morale.

4.4.6 Major examples of development awareness activities in the UK include:

- World Teachers' Day in October. Last year a number of UK schools participated in events designed to recreate a "Day in the Life of a Zambia Teacher". This included teaching under trees, teaching classes of up to 150 with no resources and teaching in unfamiliar languages. A number of local papers picked up the story. This annual event has the full backing of the NUT.
- The GCE Global Week of Action (started in April 2003) which is designed to increase awareness about the numbers of children who never get a chance to go to school, with a focus on girls. Events included the 'Biggest Ever Lesson', which was taught simultaneously in over 50 countries.
- School linking programme run jointly with British council with DFID funding.

4.4.7 In addition there is considerable anecdotal evidence that returned volunteer teachers use their experience of schools and of living and working in a different culture in developing countries in teaching in the UK – there are over 400 RV teachers active in a VSO Teachers network, see the Development Awareness section of this report.

Linking the HIV/ AIDS programme with development awareness in the UK

4.4.8 VSO is a member of the UK NGO Consortium and the *Stop AIDS Campaign*, a consortium of UK international development and HIV/ AIDS organisations and groups¹⁹. Launched on World AIDS Day 2001, the campaign works to raise awareness in the UK about global HIV/ AIDS epidemic and to campaign for scaled up international action. Annexe 19 provides a summary of the campaign.

4.4.9 With regard to VSO's role and contribution to the campaign:

- It is one of the four leading organisations in the campaign, and it is one of the more dynamic contributors;
- It has made a significant policy input to the campaign, based on learning in the field;
- It brings considerable expertise in communication and the media.
- It has made a major contribution through their openness in working with the campaign, showing a willingness to contribute, something that comes from the top of the organisation.
- Individually many volunteers returned from southern Africa²⁰ are extremely active in raising awareness of issues around HIV/AIDS in the UK.

4.4.10 In addition to the membership of advocacy campaigns VSO has carried out a number of successful media campaigns and other publicity work. The

¹⁹ Members include Bethany Children's Trust, the Diana Fund, ImpAcTAIDS, Elton John AIDS Foundation, African HIV Policy Network, Garage House Trust, National AIDS Trust and SPW and various international NGOs.

²⁰ Over 700 to date since 1999.

most recent examples are: the recent Cultural Breakthrough campaign, consisting of a photographic exhibition and a collection of essays and research on connections across cultures, and; the Global Heroes campaign, run with the African and Caribbean Finance Forum, which seeks to recognise the achievements of Britains' black communities. The greatest strength and source of success of this publicity work are the RVs, either those well-connected RVs in the media or, more importantly, the RVs with compelling experiences and stories, which are much appreciated by the media.

4.4.11 The monitoring and evaluation of the advocacy campaigns is again a joint activity to be carried out by the consortiums involved. In addition VSO has had the contributions of their own RVs to the public campaigns monitored by an independent organisation. There is also close monitoring of VSO's own media work and of regular coverage, which is carried out independently on a quarterly basis.

Overall findings

4.4.12 VSO has made and continues to make a substantial contribution to work in development awareness in the UK. In the past this contribution has mainly been made on a more informal basis. VSO is now making considerable efforts to formalise the organisation's support to this development awareness work, efforts which seem to be paying off. The difficulties are in capturing these contributions and the impacts that they have, as the PPA framework shows.

4.4.13 VSO has realised that it not possible to work effectively in isolation in development awareness and that the best contributions can be made in collaboration with partners with strengths in these areas. VSO is in the process of forming partnerships in the fields of global education and advocacy. Despite the early stage of these partnerships, this strategy is already proving to be successful as the work with the British Council in the Global Schools Partnership and the contributions to the Global Campaign for Education and the Stop AIDS Campaign are showing.

4.4.14 Monitoring and evaluation in Outcome 2 is carried out at an activity level, looking at the direct impacts of interventions and strategies – see data for Outcome 2 in the summary OPR, Annexe 13. A monitoring framework for activities in Outcome 2 has been developed and is included as Annex A17. The success criteria in the current PPA framework are very broad and it is likely that, even if reliable information could be collected on changes in awareness amongst the groups mentioned, there would be problems with attribution. This is a problem that all organisations working in development awareness currently face.

4.5 ISSUES RAISED BY THE REVIEW

4.5.1 As is noted above monitoring and evaluation in this area is a particular issue. There have been a range of efforts made to monitor activities and their success, as discussed above. However, there have as yet been no overall efforts to assess progress against the success criteria for Outcome 2. The

Success Criteria and MoV in the PPA Framework are rather very broad and are not specific to the work of VSO when compared with those for Outcomes 1 and 3. It is also the case that development awareness is an area where experience in impact assessment does seem to still be very limited across the range of organisations working in this field.

4.5.2 DFID's own work in surveying public attitudes and opinions with regard to international development has been mentioned as being particularly valuable. This is perhaps an area where resources and experience are best pooled and where efforts at impact assessment should be undertaken together. Given the importance of collaborative work in development awareness, there is a similar need to look for more wide-scale, broad-based evaluations which attempt to assess the impact of a range of interventions. Such a collaborative approach to evaluation would best be led by DFID.

5 OUTCOME 3 AND MONITORING AND EVALUATION

5.1 ENHANCED LEARNING AND DISSEMINATION

5.1.1 Enhanced capacity to learn and disseminate lessons arising from VSO work (outcome 3 of the PPA M&E framework) is evident in the findings for outcomes 1 and 2 (sections 3 and 4). Specific examples of identifiable lessons learnt contributing to development debates and practices are summarised in Annexe 18.

Overall findings

5.1.2 Main findings:

1. Effective learning structures and mechanisms exist through the management structure of country programme staff, regional programme managers and the senior management team, which are supported by specialist expertise (e.g. sector expertise, advocacy and programme development skills). There is ample documentation about programmes and the review team was highly impressed by VSO's commitment to learning. But there is too much descriptive information and not enough critical analysis of effectiveness and results. As already noted the quality of reporting tends to be poor, but the review team was impressed by the quality of programmes. This stems from weak M&E capacity (see below).
2. Enhanced capacity is evident in the increased recruitment of professional programme staff, and a higher ratio of programme staff to volunteers.
3. RAISA has informed the design of subsequent HIV/ AIDS programmes (Table 3.6): the growth in the number of programmes, and the success in attracting donor funding, clearly illustrates effective internal learning and dissemination. Other evidence of inter-country programme sharing includes the use of participatory approaches and models of partnership development.
4. Evidence of wider sharing and dissemination of information comes with the role of volunteers in partnership building, and their facilitative role in the GCE, VTC and *StopAIDS* campaigns (communicating the voice of

partners). The basis of VSO's contribution to development awareness work in the UK is volunteers, and their role in the process is in itself an effective learning mechanism.

5.2 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

5.2.1 This is the area where the most work is required by VSO over the remainder of the PPA and which should be an important focus in the new PPA. Many of the necessary pieces are in place but VSO has struggled to bring them together. There is a great deal of information, as well as skills, knowledge and ideas, which could be used to bring the pieces together. The review team considers that there is scope for developing an effective system for collating, analysing and disseminating learning across the organisation and more widely.

Structures and systems

5.2.2 VSO is already focused on the collection of M&E data at key levels:

- Placement level for collecting evidence of the effectiveness of strategies and for collecting examples of innovation;
- Partnership level for assessing what are the problems faced in the reform and development process and for collecting an alternative view of what partnership is;
- Country level for an overall assessment of effectiveness of strategies and for contributing to and learning from national-level debates on impact with partners;
- International level for collecting and disseminating evidence of effective strategies and partnerships.

5.2.3 Equally importantly VSO has many structures and systems in place to be able to develop and utilise an effective M&E system, including:

- Involvement of volunteers in both assessments of placements and the development of the programme;
- Involvement of partners with programme staff in assessing placements and the development of the partnership;
- Involvement of volunteers, partners and programme staff in assessing and developing the programme objectives and the country programme;
- Regional Programme Managers and networks of Programme Directors for regional learning, and;
- The role of VSO senior management and the evolution of the strategic resource allocation (SRA) process (Annexe 20).

Information available

5.2.4 VSO's SRA process was developed in 2001 to identify less effective programmes: VSOUK had already taken a decision to reduce the number of country programmes from 40 to 30, and a tool was needed which was consultative and transparent. The performance effectiveness tool - PET – provides baseline information for assessing country programme progress in a) focussing on disadvantage and the causes of disadvantage; b) the programmatic approach, and c) in terms of meeting numerical performance targets. Country programmes self-assessed their progress, but although the results are subjective (some programmes playing up progress and some not appreciating achievements) through a continual process of assessment they should become more consistent over time.

5.2.5 At the level of country programmes other major sources of M&E information are:

- Volunteer placement reports.
- Partners' reports and reviews/ evaluations.
- Country programme annual reports (ACRs), which include an update on progress against PET table data.
- Country and programme/ sector reviews, which are undertaken about every three years.

5.2.6 The crucial level for good quality M&E information is country programme level. Here the results of programmes can be assessed at the district or regional level in the first instance. Where impact is clear at the national level, results can be assessed at national level. Without good quality country programme information, corporate M&E information can only be *ad hoc*. The review team does not believe that quantitative data will be meaningful at the corporate level, but rather that VSO can demonstrate the role and contribution of volunteers to development through:

- Quantitative and qualitative analysis in country programmes.
- Qualitative analysis of effectiveness at corporate level, supported with country programme examples of effectiveness and impact.
- Making a distinction between effectiveness and impact (for example effectiveness as in improved organisational performance of NGOs or an education department and impact in terms of the MDGs), which may require a two tier M&E system. If an education programme needs 10 years before impact can realistically be assessed, then meantime it is more appropriate to focus on performance and critical analysis of the effectiveness of the strategies being used to improve the quality of education.

Overall findings about the quality of M&E systems and information

5.2.7

1. The review team believes that the PET tables provide an excellent 'snapshot' of how country programmes are developing over time, and they provide senior management with information to monitor programme development and effectiveness at a corporate level.

2. Development goal area country reviews, particularly in education and for the RAISA programme are used by VSOUK to prepare annual reports, and there is a tendency for these to be descriptive, rather than analytical. These reports and reviews focus entirely on meeting locally perceived programme needs and so lack the consistency that is needed to monitor progress across goals more holistically.
3. Significant change stories provide illustrative case studies of effectiveness at placement level, but this method allows for 'cherry picking', and is used to systematically report on the same programme through time or to focus on sustainable programme outcomes/ outputs. In the view of the review team it is best used to present innovative and unexpected outcomes, to supplement systematic M&E, and not as a substitute for programme M&E.
4. There is a need for more systematic M&E at country level to allow VSO to qualitatively assess its contribution to development in country, and internationally.
5. The current PPA framework is not an effective monitoring and evaluation tool: it is too narrowly focused on specific, quantitative targets and misses out on what is most innovative and interesting about the programme.

5.3 ISSUES RAISED BY THE REVIEW

5.3.1 The review has several suggestions about how VSO could improve the quality of M&E information and enhance M&E capacity. These have already been discussed with country programmes staff in Ghana and members of the senior management team.

5.3.2 To strengthen country level M&E and the design of programme the review team suggests that each programme is designed using logical framework thinking based on the appropriate VSO corporate development goal; a purpose or a strategic objective, and outcomes/ outputs. This matrix should nest into the PPA M&E Framework. Annual country reporting should use the indicators (or success criteria) of the matrix, and results should be presented in an output to purpose review (OPR) type format. Qualitative analysis should accompany the matrix in the ACR narrative

5.3.3 The last group of suggestions are concerned with strengthening M&E capacity through establishing a system of situated learning for country programme staff and a roving M&E training/ support team. More specifically it is suggested that:

- A timetable of M&E training/ support be developed for country programmes, it is suggested that this takes the form of an initial visit of one month training/ support, followed up by six monthly or annual visits,
- A programme staff member in each country has responsibility for supporting M&E in all development goals.
- The roving team includes expertise in all development goal areas.

6 NEXT PPA

6.1 The review team strongly recommends that there be a second PPA between DFID and VSO at a similar funding level to the current one, and that:

- The PPA covers five years, and it should fit as closely as possible with VSO's strategic planning cycle.
- The PPA should be modelled on other NGO PPAs, which are based on the strategic plan and M&E framework of the NGO.
- The role of volunteers in development and the development of partnerships should be central to the next PPA.
- Before the next PPA VSO should put in place and start implementing a M&E strategy set within the framework of the current strategic plan (Focus for Change) and setting out approaches to M&E at the country programme level in particular.
- The negotiations of the next PPA should involve consultations with a wider range of stakeholders in DFID, including country offices and health and education.
- The negotiations should particularly look at VSO country programmes and the links to DFID country programmes.

6.2 The review supports continuing the focus on education and HIV/ AIDS in the next PPA – these are major and strategic areas of programme activity where VSO has a distinctive contribution to make, and an added value.