



VSO/Ingrid de Wit

Improving the Quality and Quantity of Maize Production

Farmers in Panyam district, Mangu Local Government Area, Plateau State, Nigeria, are predominantly maize farmers. The majority intercrop their maize production with Irish potatoes, sorghum, and beans in their smallholdings. Farming is a profession that is traditionally passed from generation to generation. Over the years, repeated use of the same seed/grain as planting material has resulted in reduced yields due to disease build-up, reduced hybrid vigour, and striga infestation.

voice

August 2012 - November 2012

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Country Director's desk

I am excited to join as the Country Director of VSO Nigeria. I come from Bangalore India, after completing graduation in Agriculture Engineering, post-graduation in Rural Management and more than 25 years of experience with international organisations like Oxfam, EveryChild UK, ActionAid International in Afghanistan in different capacities. Thanks to Dr Kenna Owoh for putting together such an excellent hand over of the programme, introducing the key elements of the programme, the people and the issues currently faced by the country programme and the organisation. This gave me an opportunity to appreciate the new country Strategy 2012-15 that has recently been approved as well as the political and economic context of Nigeria. She has kindly agreed to extend some support beyond her tenure to ensure smooth transition and in managing the critical Diaspora research initiative.

On behalf of the VSO Nigeria team and partners I wish to thank her contributions she has made in her short tenure as Country Director, by developing a focused but integrated strategy focusing on the holistic development of the youth. The power of the statement "Youth, Not the oil will be the Nigeria's most valuable resource in the 21st Century." summarises the thrust and the focus of our strategy for the next few years. Her contributions in developing the systems and a strong team to deliver the strategy and build a robust organization in Nigeria are most valuable. Please join me in wishing her the best in her endeavours.



Above
Sriramappa Gonchikara
Country Director
of VSO Nigeria

I was fortunate to participate in the end of service event for the 4th batch of national graduate volunteering programme especially listening to some of the exciting and touching experiences of the volunteers during the last one year in the communities and the contributions they have made in changing the realities as well as experiences they gained; the message was clear the programme was successful in developing lifelong volunteers among the 22 young men and women who have participated. The contributions of National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) team, the partners and our own team members in making this a success need to be acknowledged.

While the deteriorating security situation especially in northern parts of the country is posing new challenges, the success of national volunteering, NGVP give new opportunities to innovate in terms our approach of how international, national and community volunteering could be effectively combined in such a way that they could complement each other to make lasting changes in the lives of the youth the country strategy has targeted. Models of remote support to community / local volunteers/ partners by International volunteers whose mobility is constrained need to be evolved.

In order to achieve this we need to complete the restructuring of the organisations in order to build an organisation capable of the delivering the new strategy, building strong monitoring, evaluation and learning systems to capture and demonstrate impact; we need to mobilise enough restricted resources to overcome challenges of shrinking unrestricted funding and developing strong partnerships with local / international NGOs as well as government.

With the support of the dedicated team and volunteers I am confident we are in a position to develop and strengthen the programme to the new heights in delivering the organisational strategy and vision to make lasting impact on the lives of the most marginalised.

Sriramappa Gonchikara
Country Director
of VSO Nigeria



VSO Nigeria

VSO international

VSO is an international development charity that works through professional volunteers who live and work at the heart of communities in 37 countries around the world. Working in partnership with local colleagues they share their skills and expertise to help find long-term solutions to poverty.

VSO History

VSO began in 1958, when Alec and Mora Dickson recruited and sent 16 volunteers in response to a letter from the Bishop of Portsmouth asking for people to teach English overseas. Much has changed since then. VSO has worked in over 90 countries and has placed over 40,000 volunteers. In 2004, we were voted top international development charity.

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Note: The views expressed in this newsletter are each authors' own and do not reflect those of VSO Nigeria

We've gone from being a UK charity to an international one, with recruitment bases in eight countries. At this very moment, as a result of our efforts, over 14 million children are receiving a better education, almost five million people are accessing better quality HIV and AIDS services, and over a million disabled people are better able to enforce their rights to education and health services.

VSO Nigeria

VSO has been working in Nigeria since 1968 partnering with like-minded organizations and enabling people with different but complimentary skills to work together as equals irrespective of their background. We believe that individuals can make a real difference by cooperating and sharing skills with each other.

Our programmes also enable Nigerian organizations to work together and form networks to achieve common goals

Our Vision

We know that youth, not oil will be Nigeria's most valuable resource in the 21st century.¹

We envision a society where Nigerian young women and men - who comprise 70% of the population - are leading healthy, productive and dignified lives; contributing meaningfully to national economic and social development; and participating actively in peaceful democratic governance. We envision a society where the innovative energy of youth is harnessed for social justice in Nigeria and a world without poverty.

Our Program

Our new Country Strategy (2012-2015) is a youth-centred integrated program which addresses the key priority of the productive engagement of Nigeria's youth in the peaceful development of the country. We will build the capacity of civil society and government partners and stakeholders to contribute to youth employment/self-employment through selected skills transfer and vocational training that secures youth livelihoods; through improving the quality of, and access to, education for children and youth as the foundation of youth employment; and by engaging youth as active citizens in their own development through leadership training, promoting peace and reconciliation, mainstreaming gender equality, and advocacy directed towards promoting a youth-responsive policy environment.

A Different Approach To Resource Mobilization

Writer

Oanh Pham is an
Organisational
Development
Advisor with YMCA
Lafia

My NGO is YMCA Mada Hills. The Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) Mada Hills is a non-profit Christian Organization for both male and female. The YMCA Mada Hills was founded in 1969 with the aim of facilitating relevant community based programs and services, mobilizing communities towards self-help community project for poverty alleviation and improved livelihoods, empowering youths to become better citizens of their respective communities. Like all NGOs. YMCA is striving for sustainability.

There are many ways to achieve sustainability and one of the ways is fundraising. The word fundraising has been thrown around the YMCA for many years but the actual action of fund raising is very foreign. On July 14th, 2012 the YMCA Mada Hills accomplished their first fundraiser. It was a simple yard sale. In Canada, every summer there are plenty of people and neighbourhoods that hold one day selling of their items that they no longer use or need. When I got to YMCA, I noticed that there were a lot of assets and things that were lying around not being used.



Above:

I wrote a small proposal in regards to selling of these items with a colleague and presented it to the Board of Management. It was approved and a date was picked. Along with other colleagues we started to clean up the compound. We collected so many items like generators, fans, stabilizers, computers and even a car! The advertising strategy was small and low budget. Putting flyers to all churches and shops one week before the actual date of sale and word of mouth were the strategies. On Saturday July 14th, we woke up to thunder and lightning and heavy rain. I was so discouraged. Rain always chases people away from sales let alone thunderstorms. When I got to work, all my staff was there putting things in order getting ready for the sale.

My spirit lifted as I see them working without complaining. We waited for a half hour and only 5 people showed up. The opening of the sale was a welcome address from the Past President where he gave an introduction of what YMCA is and what we were trying to achieve. Then the sale began. It was actually more like an open auction where customers picked out items they wanted and bargained for it. Previous to the sale, the staff and I have sat down and priced all the items with the minimum price to be sold.

There were only five people and the sale lasted for only two hours but the YMCA made N 124, 800 in cash. For big ticket items, customers were paying a deposit first then a later date would be arranged for completion. To my biggest surprise a car was sold two days later for N 300, 000! The money that was collected from the sale went to replaced or fixed items that were outdated or broken. A new generator was purchased for the YMCA Agriculture Training Centre (ATC) and computers were purchased to replace the outdated and broken computers in the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) centre.

Tsangaya Project in Jigawa State

Writer

Lucy Kenedy was the Capacity Building Advisor placed with ESSPIN

Tsangaya Project Overview

30 members of the community (10 from each of three government areas: Roni, Birniwa and Miga) were selected in collaboration with the Local Government Education Authority (LGEA) and the religious Mallams of the Tsangaya schools. These 30 community members were trained to teach the secular subjects of English, Math, Hausa, and Social Studies to selected students between the age range of 6-14 from Tsangaya schools.

Traditionally, the students from the Tsangaya schools live with the teacher. They learn to read, write, and recite the Quran and secure their own livelihoods through a plethora of activities such as farming with the teacher, being local household helps, or begging for food and money in the neighbourhood. The aim in Jigawa State is to provide a secular education to some of the students from Tsangaya schools to support them in their future life.

Below:
Lucy Kenedy Supporting a community teacher, Bala Khalli, in his school in Roni LGEA

Progress and Achievement of the Project

The teachers are very enthusiastic and have demonstrated selfless and effective service in the communities, sometimes even using their own allowance to provide additional writing and instructional materials.

Communities are actively supporting the program. Three communities (two in Roni and one in Miga) are sponsoring additional teachers to expand the school to 2 classes. The majority of the teaching spaces are lent out by the communities.

A 67 year old man named Mallam Umar Muhammad enrolled in the school in Sabon Gari, Roni Lgea. He enjoys learning to read and write now that this opportunity has come to his village.

The pilot has equally promoted cooperation and unity of purpose and understanding by all the respective proprietors.

Seven of the Tsangaya proprietors have begun to improve their farming activities to improve the feeding of the pupils

Modules 1-7 of the Islamiyya Quránic and Tsangaya Education (IQTE) Training for the community teachers have been successfully completed, resulting in greater capacity of the teachers to deliverer child centered methods of teaching and learning. This too also supports higher attendance by the pupils.

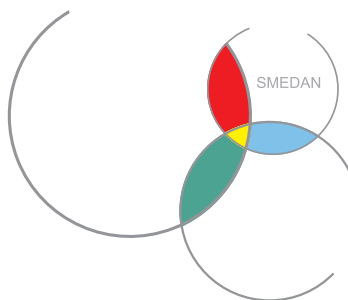
Expansion of the Project

As the pilot has been so successful in Jigawa State, it is now being extended to more schools.

The 6 mentor teachers are now fully trained and able to lead their own LGEA by training an additional 20 schools in each LGEA. This time the focus is on Islamiyya schools, which enroll more female students and teachers than the other Islamic schools. The aim is to recruit as many female teachers as possible to empower them in their communities as well as raising the standard of basic education in Jigawa State.



Partner's profile



Small And Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria

The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) was established in 2003 to facilitate the promotion and development of a structured and efficient Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) Sub-Sector to enhance sustainable economic development in Nigeria. The Agency is the apex and coordinating institution for all matters relating to starting, resuscitating and growing MSMEs in Nigeria. The Agency also has the responsibility of contributing to the attainment of Vision 20-2020, the Transformation Agenda of the present administration and the Cluster Development Approach of the Ministry of Trade and Investment. The Agency provides the following services with the overall objective of alleviating poverty, expanding gainful employment opportunities, wealth creation and sustainable economic growth and development:

.....
 Generation and dissemination of business information

 Business awareness creation

 Business development services

 Access to market and finance

 Advancing entrepreneurship education

 Stimulating entrepreneurship/enterprise development

 Enterprise cooperation and clustering

 Policy advocacy for improved business operating environment

VSO Nigeria's secure livelihoods programme has partnered with SMEDAN since 2006. VSO has placed two international volunteers with SMEDAN with the aim of strengthening the monitoring and evaluation system and improving the enterprises development programme.

SMEDAN and VSO Nigeria are also partnering in the development of the SMEDAN-VSO Agriculture Project (S-VAP) on a pilot basis. The aim of the project is to tackle the poverty of small-scale farmers and youth unemployment. The objective of the project is to increase productivity and profitability of small-scale farmers in selected pilot communities. The S-VAP project is designed to stimulate and spur entrepreneurial drive in agricultural development in Nigeria. A total of 150 young people between the ages of 18-35 will be trained under the S-VAP Young Agriculture Scheme. In this role, they will be supported by existing Community Agriculture Extension Volunteers (CAEV) and international volunteers to effectively support 1350 local farmers in Mada Hills (Nassarawa State), Panyam (Plateau State), Akure (Ondo State), Kafanchan (Kaduna State) and Idukpani (Cross River State). The commodities of focus are groundnut, maize, cassava and ginger. Each of the 150 young people will be required to develop a 'Plan of Action' for their future to ensure the benefits of the pilot translate into self employment in the agriculture sector.

It is anticipated that S-VAP will work closely with other stakeholders and partners such as:

International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA).

State Agriculture Development Programme

Bank of Agriculture

International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

Commercial Banks

USAID Markets

Federal Ministry of Agriculture

International Center for Soil Fertility and Agricultural Development (IFDC).

SMEDAN and VSO have signed an M.O.U for this partnership and arrangements are in place to consult widely with other key stakeholders and potential sponsors.

Improving the Quality and Quantity of Maize Production

Continued from page 1

Additionally, farmers lacked bargaining power in the market, as the maize market is largely a buyers' market where the middleman determines the quantity and price of maize purchased. Farmers did not have financial knowledge of the cost of production and were not organized, placing them in a disadvantaged position to bargain and interface with buyers for better prices..

Farmers had very limited contact in the market and depended mainly on government Agriculture Extension Agents. This contributed to inefficient land use, high costs of production, and low yields. On average, farmers harvested 1.5 tons/hectare a year. In addition to low production, part of the harvest was lost post harvest to pest damage and contamination/fungal infestation.

Reliance on maize farming as the main source of income for rural households has perpetuated poverty in many rural communities. Farmers were not able to produce adequate harvests to sell and sustain their households. Most families experienced 2-3 months of hunger as they did not have adequate food for their households.



Above:
Different species
of maize

VSO Nigeria's secure livelihoods programme contributed to addressing the scenario above through the Making Market Work for Poor Project (MMW4P) funded by Accenture. Market research was conducted in 2009 on the value chain for maize by Ryan Kaden, a short term volunteer. One of the key recommendations of the study led to the recruitment of long term volunteer, Joel Onyango from Kenya; Joel served as the Agriculture Extension Specialist with Cocin Community Development Programme (CCDP) based in Panyam Plateau state.

Joel was instrumental to the establishment of Community Agriculture Extension Volunteers Scheme at CCDP with 27 National Volunteers (8 women, 19 men) providing services in 9 communities. CCDP introduced two new promising maize seed varieties which have been well received by farmers. The seeds are vigorous, tolerant to striga, and resistant to leaf rust and maize stripe virus. If you walk the streets of Panyam you will now see ample amounts of green maize being roasted.

The beneficiaries have been able to increase their production by over 30% through the use of the improved seeds and availability of extension services and training. Beneficiaries now keep records of their activities and expenses. They also practice better crop husbandry, post harvest handling, and seed treatment. The farmers now target 4-6 tons/hectare a year from their fields.

One-on-One

Candace Dixon

Knowledge Sharing Within and Across the Region

Please tell us about yourself

I love to travel and grew up in a house where helping others was required; hence my interest in VSO. Exploring new places, people, and cultures is fascinating. Every trip allows me to take part in a different way of life and at the same time provides small familiar comforts that encourage me to appreciate home. Over the years, through my experiences, I have learned much about myself. I have learned that I am open to differences and enjoy learning from others yet grounded in who I am and what I believe. I am adventurous, a foodie (someone that really enjoys food - both cooking and eating it) and all around kind-hearted.

Education background and Work experience

I have a Bachelors of Science degree in Business Administration with a dual concentration in Marketing and International Business from Clark Atlanta University, U.S.A. After graduating in 2005, I joined the U.S. Accenture practice. I am a motivated consulting professional with 7 years experience gathering client needs and implementing system and process changes to support business goals; including 3 years of planning and preparing business users to perform their day to day activities in the context of new corporate initiatives. During this time, I have delivered system and methodology training in 4 countries and deployed technology to support retail store openings in 5 countries.

Your placement (The organisation, your role, colleagues, gaps and achievements, why you chose the placement)

I am placed as a volunteer with VSO Nigeria, specifically under the Secure Livelihoods Program, working as the West Africa Knowledge Share Manager for the Making Markets Work for the Poor project. My

Left:
Candace Dixon



goals are to create and implement a Knowledge Sharing (KS) strategy and facilitate KS activities to reduce obstacles faced by agriculture beneficiaries and improve livelihoods across West Africa as a result of applying best practices from awareness and shared knowledge. I arrived on the 1st of July 2012 and am still settling into my role. However, I am approaching my first round of Partner visits and looking forward to the challenges, achievements, and surprises in store!

Sustainability of your work in the organisation

I hope to identify a contact within each Program Office and Partner to continue to support knowledge sharing within and across the region. By working with all parties and facilitating collaboration, I plan to create a process that considers and works through current challenges and lays the foundation for continued sharing. I also plan to put in place an incentive program to encourage contributions and reward innovative fixes to obstacles.

Challenges

Initially, I foresee challenges with accessing up-to-date information. Most Partners and volunteers working under Secure Livelihood supporting the agriculture projects, do not have consistent, if any, Internet access. This limits communication to phones calls, face-to-face visits, and postal mail. Face-to-face meetings between partners and sending information via postal mail can take an extensive amount of time to plan and carry out activities. Phone calls are reliable and immediate, however, the partner/volunteer must know whom to contact for a given challenge.

Life in Abuja and Nigeria (Neighbours, food, culture, entertainment)

In my 8 weeks in Abuja, I have managed to visit several gardens (outdoor restaurants), go to the movies (something I really enjoy) and attend a traditional wedding. I have found that I enjoy chicken suya, point and kill fish and sour sop (a fruit). Overall, I am really enjoying my experience and have been pleasantly surprised at how seamless it has been to get settled. I love music, it has the ability to uplift or calm me down, and I have discovered Nigerian music...it is definitely a part of my daily routine!

Learning Corner

Understanding the Basics of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

Writer

Gordon Wazare is the M&E Advisor with SMEDAN.

Whenever people think of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), different perceptions come to mind. Some understand it as a complex process that requires very high conceptual and analytical ability. Terminology like accountability, transparency, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, quality, relevance, and sustainability are synonymous to M&E activities. M&E is the process by which efforts are measured or verified quantitatively or qualitatively.

In this article, we will look at the key steps in monitoring and evaluation. Before we discuss the steps, let's define monitoring and evaluation. Monitoring is a continuous function that uses the systematic collection of data on specified indicators to provide management and main stakeholders of an ongoing intervention with indications of the extent of progress in implementation of activities, achievement of outputs, and progress in the use of allocated funds and other resources. Evaluation is the systematic and objective assessment of an on-going or completed project, programme, or policy including its design, implementation, and results.

The aim is to determine the relevance and fulfillment of objectives, development efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. Monitoring and evaluation are distinct yet complimentary. Monitoring gives information on where a policy, project, or programme is at any given time (and over time) relative to respective targets and outcomes. It is descriptive in intent. Evaluation gives evidence of why targets and outcomes are not being achieved. It seeks to address the issue of causality.

It is important to note that M&E is part of the wider concept of Results-Based Management (RBM), which focuses on tangible results to be delivered and "value-for-money". RBM is increasingly being adopted by government, private, and voluntary organizations because the public is demanding better services and more effective resource allocation and utilization. In RBM, success is measured by outcomes, impacts, and their sustainability as opposed to rudimentary approaches, that measure success by the extent of goods and services delivered and the ratio of inputs to outputs (efficiency).

The key steps in Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation are:

STEP 1: Establish the results framework. Logical Framework Approach/Analysis (LFA) is widely used for projects while Programme Action Logic Model (PALM) is more applicable for programmes. In government and public sector performance management, Performance Contracting (PC) is commonly used while in the private sector, Balanced Scorecard is used. Other frameworks include Quality Management System (QMS) using ISO 9001:2008 QMS standards, and Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award.

STEP 2: Define the indicators that will be used to measure results. Performance indicators are used to measure progress in activity implementation, inputs/output ratios (efficiency) and input/outcome ratios (effectiveness) while impact indicators measure desired change or effects caused by the policy, programme, or project.

STEP 3: Determine the baseline and targets. Baseline is the prevailing conditions before commencement of policy, programme, or project implementation. These are normally established through baseline survey. Targets are milestones or desired shifts from baseline during and after policy, programme, or project implementation.

STEP 4: Develop the Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP), simply referred to as the monitoring plan. The key elements of a monitoring plan are performance indicators and their definitions, data sources, methods of data collection, frequency and schedule of data collection, responsibilities for acquiring data, data analysis plans, plans for complementary evaluation, plans for communicating and using performance information, and budgeting.

STEP 5: Collect data, analyze, and report. While planning for data collection, it is important to first exhaustively explore secondary data sources before embarking on primary data mining. This saves a lot of time and money. While collecting primary data, remember that qualitative and quantitative methods are used complementarily. Equally important are the critical dimensions of data quality such as validity, integrity, precision, reliability, and timeliness.

STEP 6: Plan and undertake evaluation. Evaluations can be ex-ante (appraisals), formative (e.g. mid-term evaluations), or ex-post (e.g. terminal evaluation at closure and impact evaluation). In all these forms of evaluations, monitoring reports and baseline data are very handy. A core form of evaluation is impact evaluation.. Impact is the difference between outcomes with the program and without it. The goal of impact evaluation is to measure this difference in a way that can attribute the difference to the programme/project, and only the programme/project.

Right:
Gordon Wazare



This informs and guides future programming or project planning. In impact evaluation, adequacy (whether impact was reached), plausibility (understanding what affects the outcomes) and probability (determination of the causal effects of an intervention on the outcome) are assessed. Impact evaluation designs include: True Experiment (e.g. randomized pre-test and post-test with control group), Quasi Experiment with comparison group, and Non-Experiment (e.g. ex-post comparison of project/programme and non-equivalent group and ex-post rapid assessment). True Experiment is the strongest but most expensive method while non-experiment is the weakest and least expensive method.

Finally, M&E is more meaningful and useful if there is real transformation from data to information to knowledge and wisdom. Processing and analyzing data yields information while synthesizing, interpreting, and understanding information leads to knowledge gain. Ultimately, consistently applying knowledge gained in making judgments and decisions leads to both personal and organizational wisdom.

M&E is based on the premise that:

1. If you do not measure results, you cannot tell success from failure.
2. If you cannot see success, you cannot reward it.
3. If you cannot reward success, you are probably rewarding failure.
4. If you cannot see success, you cannot learn from it.
5. If you cannot recognize failure, you cannot correct it.
6. If you can demonstrate results, you can win public support.

The essence of M&E is to know what to measure, how to measure it, and how to present and use the measurement. This entails establishing the results logic, baseline, targets, and actual. Comparisons are then made between baseline and target, baseline and actual, and targets and actual.

PLAN FOR RESULTS, MEASURE RESULTS, DEMONSTRATE RESULTS. THINK M&E!

Returned Volunteer (RV)

Susan William

Writer

Susan William was the Communication Advisor placed with Education as a Vaccine

Confessions of a mid-career volunteer: Passing on years of skill while learning new ones

I left for a placement with VSO Nigeria two months after my 40th birthday. I'd been working in communications for about 17 years, recently became debt free, and decided to fulfil a lifelong dream of volunteering overseas. My age caused some serious speculation as to my reasons for going away. "Sue's having a midlife crisis" was a commonly used phrase among friends, family and co-workers. In your 20s, this kind of an opportunity makes you brave and free-spirited. In your 40s, it apparently means you're having some sort of existential crisis spurred on by the mid-point of life.

I am happy to say that this isn't true at all. The truth is, for me at least, this was the perfect time for me to take advantage of this. In my 20's, I was entirely focused on getting my degree in Political Science and then Communications, followed by a drive to find a paying job so that I could actually pay back my student loans. It wasn't until recently that I became debt free and was in position to take the time off.

My current job in Canada also made it easy for me to take advantage of this opportunity. I work in Public Affairs for the Government of British Columbia, and they have an agreement allowing you to take an unpaid leave of absence to volunteer with VSO. In return, they keep your benefits in play and save your job for when you come back. I jumped at the chance, and in July 2011 I arrived for a one-year placement in Abuja, Nigeria. This agreement is a great way to get professionals to volunteer, without having to worry about losing the benefits they have built up over time.

My placement is as a Communications Advisor with Education as a Vaccine (EVA) – a youth-led NGO based in Abuja that runs programs in the FCT area, Nassarawa State, Benue State, Cross River State and Niger State. One thing I love about this organization is that it's Nigerian run, which is important to me. I like the thought of helping Nigerians who know the needs that exist in their own country and want to make a difference in their own way. I also love the fact that the organization is very careful with the money it receives for programming from donors – every single Naira is accounted for to make sure that it's maximized in a way to help as many children and youth as possible.

Sometimes, I think I have learned more from EVA than I have been able to teach. I have learned that everything is interconnected. The organization began in 2000 with just an HIV and AIDS focus, but eventually that vision reached further after EVA realized that working on just one challenge wasn't enough because so many other things are linked to it. You can't solve the HIV and AIDS issue without addressing the underlying reasons for unsafe behaviour, and you can't address this unsafe behaviour without looking at the issues like poverty and education that drive the actions many people take. Recognizing this, EVA has now expanded to include programs to address the livelihoods of caregivers of orphans and vulnerable children, the need of married adolescent girls for mentors, and the need for these most vulnerable Nigerians to raise their voices to advocate for their own rights.

I have been able to pass on a lot of tools that EVA's communications staff can use, and have agreed to mentor the Communications Officer. I have gained new skills, a tremendous amount of practical insight into development issues, and a relationship with an outstanding organization that I know will continue into the future, because this is the kind of work I feel good about supporting.

They say these are the kinds of opportunities you need to take advantage of early in your life, but I don't agree. In my 40th year, I was able to learn a lot, teach plenty, and gain valuable insight that I think I might have missed earlier in my career. This is what I will take with me and apply as I continue through my career in communications.

Volunteer's profile

Miranda Moolenaar and Stefan de Gruiter

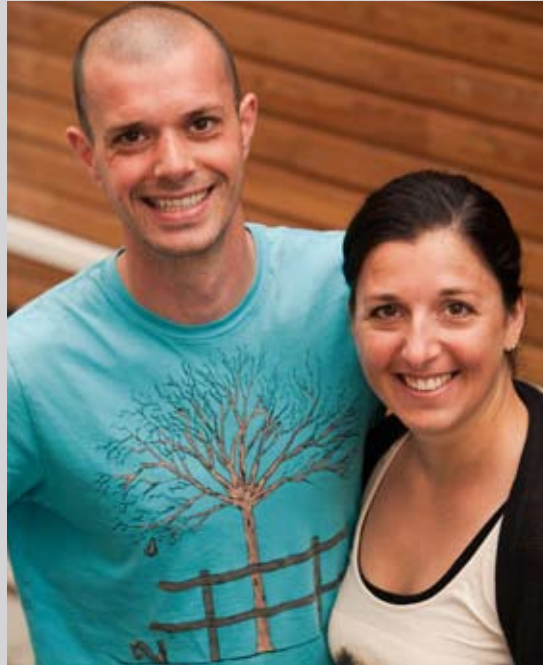
Writers

Miranda Moolenaar and Stefan de Gruiter are from the Netherlands and are placed with Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria (ESSPIN) in Ilorin, Nigeria

Giving up the easy life, all for the Nigerian children!

Since we visited The Gambia in 2010 for a short term education project we knew that we wanted to do something similar for a longer duration.. We are both teachers in Special Education in the Netherlands and have worked with primary and secondary aged children with mental development disorders, behavioral problems, and psychological disorders for the last ten years. We have been very motivated and fulfilled by this work.

After returning from the short term project in The Gambia, we applied to VSO and went through the assessment. We were glad to hear that we were accepted. Soon after, we got an offer for the placement in Nigeria. After research on the internet and some discussions about our own skills and the skills we would develop working with VSO and ESSPIN/SUBEB, we applied for the placement. After hearing the good news that we were accepted for the placement, we resigned from our jobs, sold our house, and said goodbye to our family and friends.



Left
Miranda Moolenaar
and Stefan de
Gruiter

Sunday, September 2nd, we arrived in Abuja for our placements as teacher trainers with ESSPIN/SUBEB, where we will work with the SSIT and live in Ilorin, Kwara State, for two years. We are going to support and train the SSIT in Kwara State on literacy and numeracy. We will be supporting them on writing the lesson plans, training the SSO's in the LGEA's, and visiting the schools.

We are now at the beginning of our placement and we are looking forward to meeting a lot of new people, developing our skills, learning a lot of new things, and just enjoying our new way of life in Kwara State. There will be a lot of changes and challenges for us, but we think when you are motivated, positive, and determined, you can challenge everything in life, even when it is hard.

Miranda Moolenaar and Stefan de Gruiter are from the Netherlands and are placed with Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria (ESSPIN) in Ilorin, Nigeria.

Living and working in rural Nigeria

Writers

Christine Adolf is a Capacity Building Advisor with Mary Slessor Foundation

The Mary Slessor Foundation (MSF) is a place where people grow as infinitely as the surrounding lush green landscapes of palm trees, cassava plants, and pineapple farms. This is a place where everyday experiences are anything but ordinary and where hope is felt as vividly as the raindrops that too frequently fall from the vast rainy-season sky. The natural biodiversity, traditional Efik culture, and colorful Nigerian textiles are equally and incredibly inspiring.

Situated in Akpap Okoyong, a rural village in 'The People's Paradise' of Cross River State, the MSF team of approximately twenty staff operates three distinct but interconnected units including the Vocational Training and Skills Acquisition Centre, Health Clinic, and Agricultural Processing Facility. As a Capacity Building Advisor and Project Manager, my role encompasses a variety of responsibilities and I find myself perpetually and happily busy.

My work includes teaching business, entrepreneurship, and life skills to students of our school, basic computer skills to some of our staff, extensive community outreach, spearheading the launch of an ethically traded fashion accessories business, supporting the establishment of a sexual and reproductive health and rights program for local youth, and more.

I'm constantly reminded of the importance of engaging the youth in the community and supporting them in living up to their potential, while also enabling them to earn an income.

Outside of the workplace, rural life on the border of the rainforest (to the North) and Cameroon (to the East) is, quite simply, amazing. Recreational activities are various and plentiful, from dancing to farming, and tree climbing to swimming in the river. I thoroughly enjoy attending the many events and occasions I've had the privilege of being invited to including traditional and church weddings, burials, graduations, child dedications, and inter-house sports. The spectacular Nigerian dancing is by far and always my favorite part. One of the highlights since my arrival at MSF has been organizing and hosting, with the tremendous support of the dedicated MSF staff, the student graduation, (as it was a truly magical day for everyone involved).

I absolutely love purchasing food directly from farmers, who also happen to be neighbors, and eating seasonally. I enjoy picking lime from the tree in my backyard and lemongrass from my small garden. I've become fascinated with agriculture in general and particularly as a means to ending poverty.

Living and working in rural Nigeria through CUSO International and VSO Nigeria has been a true blessing. My experience here has enabled me to work meaningfully, experience life more fully, and clarify my future professional aspirations. For this I am incredibly grateful.

Right
Christian Adolf with some kids.



Volunteers in Nigeria

As at September 2012

About this list

This list shows volunteers in Nigeria, their programme areas, placements and designations.

	First Name	Last Name	Programme area	Placement	Designation
A	Andi	Briggs	Education	College of Education Akwanga	OD Advisor
	Aswini	Ramkumar	Education	Royal Heritage Health Foundation(RHHF)	Organisation Development Advisor
B	Boubacar	Diallo	HIV/AIDS	Gede Foundation	Organisation Development Advisor
C	Candace	Dixon	Secure Livelihoods	VSO Nigeria	Knowledge Sharing Manager
	Collins	Adubango	Secure Livelihoods	CCDP	Agric Extension Manager
	Christine	Adolf	Secure Livelihoods	Mary Slessor Foundation	Capacity Building Advisor
E	Enock	Nyakundi	HIV/AIDS	Education as a vaccine	Business Development Advisor
	Emmanuel	Uko	HIV/AIDS	Positive Action For Treatment Access (PATA)	Fund Raiser Advisor
G	Gordon	Wanzare	Secure Livelihoods	SMEDAN	M & E Advisor
	Heather	Conley	HIV/AIDS	EVA	Development & Fundraiser Advisor
I	Ignatius	Oloyi	HIV/AIDS	YEF	Organisation Development Advisor
J	James	Conner	Secure Livelihoods	Hope World Wide Nigeria	Organisation Development Advisor
	Joel	Mangich	Secure Livelihoods	CCDP	Agric Extension Manager
L	Lesley	Marchant	Education	ESSPIN	Teacher Trainer
	Lilly	Mwaniki	Secure Livelihoods	NEST	Fund Raiser Advisor
	Lukas	Partzsch	Secure Livelihoods	CCDP	IT Trainer/Advisor
M	Macline	Kyalisiima	HIV/AIDS	FAHCI	OD Advisor
	Marije	Vlaanderen	Secure Livelihoods	Hope World Wide Nigeria	Human Resource Advisor
	Mckinley	Charles	HIV/AIDS	EVA	Video photography specialist
	Michael	Dhatemwa	HIV/AIDS	CAIV	OD Advisor
	Miranda	Moolenaar	Education	Kwara SUBEB	Teacher Trainer
O	Oanh	Pham	Secure Livelihoods	YMCA	OD Advisor
P	Paul	Wildenberg	Education	kwara SUBEB	IT Coordinator
	Paul	Ochola	Secure Livelihoods	DIN	OD and Fund Raising Advisor
	Paul	Kiggwe	HIV/AIDS	YEF	M&E Advisor
	Peter	Legters	Secure Livelihoods	Hope World Wide Nigeria	Market Assessment Researcher
	Peter -James	Okoyo	Secure Livelihoods	Project Agape	Agric Extension Worker

	Phillemon	Tubei	Secure Livelihoods	CCDP	Resource Mobilisation Advisor
R	Rachael	Housser-Guy	Education	Kwara ESPPIN	Planning Advisor
	Robert	Magala	HIV/AIDS	OACAG Benue	Business Development Advisor
	Robert	Wanyama	HIV/AIDS	VSO Nigeria	Fund Raiser Advisor
S	Sarah	Mukisa	HIV/AIDS	Neighbourhood Care Outreach	Monitoring and Evaluation Officer
	Sedi	Minachi	HIV/AIDS	VSO Nigeria	Diaspora Volunteer Supervisor
	Sheila	Ash	Secure Livelihoods	MSA	ODAdvisor
	Stefan	De Gruiter	Education	Kwara SUBEB	Teacher Trainer
	Susan	Kuria	Secure Livelihoods	Hope World Wide Nigeria	Market Assessment Researcher
	Sylvester	Odundo	Secure Livelihoods	CCDP	Natural Resource Mgt Advisor

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VSO Nigeria staff as at September 2012

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Sriramappa	Gonchikara	Country Director	Sriramappa.Gonchikara@vsoint.org
Wada	Yusuf	Security	
Yakiem	Tesfaldet	Programme Manager Education	Yakiem.Tesfaldet@vsoint.org

Mission

VSO brings people together to fight poverty.

Values

By thinking globally, we can change the world

Progress is only possible by working together

Knowledge is our most powerful tool

People are the best agents of change

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