



Case study – Rwanda

Education coalition brings increase to teachers' salaries

Challenge



In Rwanda children have access to free primary education, and three years of secondary education and literacy is over 71%. More than 26 000 primary school teachers teach the population to read and write, of whom more than 85% are qualified teachers. Despite this there are still many children, especially from the poorest communities, who are not enrolled in schools and are missing out on their basic education.

A problem cited by Rwandan school teachers is a lack of motivation to progress in their teaching career. The amount of responsibility and daily challenges makes it a difficult, even if rewarding, profession, and in 2006 there were particular feelings amongst teachers and their unions that the pay that teachers in Rwanda received was not reflective of their work. A symptom of this is that a majority of teachers simultaneously pursue qualifications in other sectors to eventually move away from teaching to a better-paid job, or have a second job to complement their teaching salary.

Catalyst

The teachers' union of Rwanda joined forces with national and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in a coalition with VSO to campaign for the government to increase teachers' salaries. The coalition, known as the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) persistently lobbied for a much-needed increase in teachers' salaries throughout Rwanda's 2006-7 Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy consultation process.

Joining forces with the UK Department for International Development in a coalition that could agree common concerns and lobby the Rwandan government in a coordinated way was crucial to the coalition's advocacy success. In addition, through an unprecedented bout of campaigning pressure, the education coalition put teachers' poor living and working conditions high on the government's agenda.

The various campaign events which were organised by the members of the coalition over this time focused on why teachers are so vital to communities and development. From these events, materials were produced and displayed at a 'Big Hearing' in Kigali, during Global Campaign for Education Action Week. One of these pieces of evidence was a short documentary about the situation of teachers in Rwanda where they were interviewed about the poor

conditions in which they work and live. A 'Celebration of Teachers' was held in Rwanda's National Stadium. On the way there a thousand people marched behind a 'Universal Education Bus', that was decorated with pictures of many of the children who struggle to get 'on the bus', as a way of representing the children who are not able to go to school. A marching band and traditional dancers stopped traffic throughout Kigali, the capital. The celebration went on to illustrate the challenges facing teachers in Rwanda, to politicians and education officials who were then asked to sign pledges of commitment to universal education and support for teachers.

Results

In early 2007 the Rwandan Ministry of Education, responding to the widespread campaigns by the teachers' union, NGOs and VSO volunteers, announced that it was to almost double secondary school teachers' salaries.

Thanks to the campaigning efforts of a VSO led coalition of teachers union members, VSO volunteers and national and international NGO's, the Rwandan Ministry of Education recently announced that it will be almost doubling secondary school teachers' salaries.

The advocacy and lobbying work VSO Rwanda and its partners undertook on teachers' behalf in 2006 compliments a long process of bringing together all civil society partners working in the education sector, and establishing a coalition able to agree and lobby the government on joint campaign demands.

The move by the Ministry of Education will allow many teachers to give up the second jobs they have been forced to rely on to make ends meet. This means that not only will the salary increase mean a better quality of living for teachers, but by simply freeing up their time for lesson planning and student assessment, will ensure higher standards of education for the children of Rwanda.

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