AVSI was founded in 1972 after a group of Italian friends embarked on a volunteer development project in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Today, AVSI’s programs in Africa absorb nearly half of the entire AVSI annual budget of around $50 million. AVSI’s Africa portfolio is centered on long-term development interventions but has expanded to include specific relief and post-conflict transition operations; AVSI is present in thirteen Sub-Saharan countries.

AVSI’s approach to development aims to empower local organizations, namely non-profit groups, associations or cooperatives, to sustainably provide educational, economic, medical and social services in their communities. To reach the community and its most vulnerable members, AVSI starts from individuals and their desire for a better life for themselves, accompanying them in the effort to create the conditions for a dignified future even in the most destitute and distressed situations. AVSI meets each person where they are: within the family, as members of community organizations, and as users of services such as schools and health facilities.

This approach is demanding. It requires flexibility to engage with people and groups directly and to allow the response to emerge from the ground up. This approach also requires time. AVSI’s long-term commitment has been possible due to the dedicated and professional AVSI staff members and the sustained commitment of AVSI’s private donors, as well as public and multilateral funders.

**Countries**
- Angola
- Burundi
- Republic of Congo
- Democratic Republic of Congo
- Ethiopia
- Ivory Coast
- Kenya
- Mozambique
- Nigeria
- Rwanda
- Sierra Leone
- South Sudan
- Uganda

**Sectors**
- Agriculture
- Economic Strengthening
- Education & Child / Youth Development
- Emergency & Post-Conflict Assistance
- Health & Nutrition
- Urban Upgrading
- Water & Sanitation, Environment
Sectors of Intervention

**Education and Child/ Youth Development**

Projects in Angola, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Uganda

Education is the underlying objective of all AVSI projects, and direct provision and support for education and child/youth development comprise a large portion of AVSI activities in the field. Beyond informal and formal education, child development projects also extend into family support services. Various partnerships address several specific problems regarding the educational sector, including education in emergency and post-conflict settings and the psycho-social needs of orphans and other vulnerable children.

In **Ivory Coast**, AVSI continues its program to support Orphans and Vulnerable Children, starting from the value of each child and the concern for his overall well-being. Through partnerships with the government and local bodies, AVSI guides the implementation of direct and indirect services for children and families, ensuring a quality education and a supportive environment. The project, which is funded by PEPFAR through USAID, is an extension of AVSI OVC programs in Uganda, Kenya and Rwanda.

In **Kenya**, years of engagement with informal and supplementary education have become a solid foundation for AVSI to make an important contribution to formal education in Nairobi. At the primary level, AVSI helped to found and continues to sustain the Little Prince School in Kibera slum. At the secondary level, AVSI is a main donor for the Cardinal Otunga High School, which is the result of a dynamic partnership between parents and educators. In Nairobi, the Icarus Agency for Education, founded in 2005, addresses the educational and psychosocial needs of marginalized students through cultural activities, workshops on entering the job market, entrepreneurial skills training for parents, and teacher development days reaching over 1,000 people and 20 schools.

In **Nigeria**, AVSI partners with The Seed Educational Trust to run two primary schools in needy areas around Lagos (Ikorodu and Lekki). Through the collaboration with AVSI, orphans and other vulnerable children formerly marginalized from the formal school system have been able to receive a quality education in a supportive community. The patterns of growth at both schools reflect the significant contribution of non-profit, private schools.

In **Uganda**, AVSI supports a high school built in 2011 in the poor Kireka area outside of Kampala, giving access to continued education for 600 students, many of whom are children of women affected by HIV/AIDs, whose initiative led by Meeting Point International drove the campaign to build the school.

**Distance Support Program**

AVSI’s **Distance Support Program (DSP)** is the backbone of most of AVSI’s educational projects in Africa and is a mechanism through which AVSI supports local partner organizations to provide individualized, quality care for children and young people at all stages. Made possible by private child sponsors, the DSP provides close to 17,000 children in Africa the opportunity for schooling, complementary educational activities, vocational training and micro-business support. The DSP is currently active in: Angola, Burundi, DR Congo, Ethiopia, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Sudan and Uganda.
Networking for School Quality throughout Africa

In Uganda, the Permanent Centre for Education (PCE) opened the doors of a new center in 2009 to provide workshops for teachers, social workers and communities throughout the East Africa region. Through 2011, the PCE offered 261 courses of 1 to 14 days at the Kampala center and over 20 locations across Uganda; courses have also been given in Kenya, Nigeria, Burundi and Rwanda. These have reached over 18,000 individuals, including 1,700 social workers, 7,500 teachers, 3,500 parents and 5,300 students. The PCE was initiated by a group of teachers and social workers who wanted to be proactive in front of the difficult circumstances facing their students and in 2002 began organizing workshops and courses. The PCE offers a stable reference point and resource for individuals, groups and institutions concerned with the quality of education in the East Africa region. In 2011, collaboration began to develop curriculum, provide professors and supervision for the Teacher Education program at the new St. Mary’s University in Juba, South Sudan.

“\[I\] wanted to opt out when I looked at the themes of the workshop you presented because I had learned them from my teachers’ training, but instead I have realized that you teach about the same things but deep from the roots and everything has a different and interesting meaning.”

Jamal, teacher in Dadaab refugee camp

Education in Emergencies

In Kenya, AVSI began collaboration with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in 2009 to provide teacher training and to rehabilitate schools for the hundreds of thousands of Somali refugees living in camps in Dadaab. In partnership with Mount Kenya University and the PCE, AVSI offers training sessions which had certified 381 teachers by 2011 and continue to provide support to teachers. Further sensitizations for parents throughout the camp stress the importance of education. AVSI rehabilitated around 290 classrooms in 22 of the public schools in the camps and constructed 4 semi-permanent, 16-classroom schools and 20 early childhood development centers, with funding from UNICEF, the U.S. State Department Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration and the Italian government.

Following the Rwandan genocide in 1994, AVSI was invited by UNICEF to enter the country to assist in the recovery of the thousands of children left orphaned or abandoned. One result has been the development of training manuals for psychosocial support of war-affected children through education, creative arts, and adult accompaniment. The manuals have been included in the Technical Kit on learning produced by the International Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE). The curriculum has been utilized across the African region, and even by educators in the U.S. to address the needs of children suffering the impact of Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

See Emergency & Post-Conflict Assistance for more examples in DR Congo, Ivory Coast, Burundi.
Nutrition and Health
Projects in Nigeria, South Sudan, Rwanda, Uganda

Health is a cross-cutting concern wherever AVSI is present. Avsi works to address the need for medical infrastructure and human resources, starting from those available in local communities. AVSI supports health facilities with special attention to mothers, infants, and persons with disabilities. All children of families enrolled in AVSI’s **Distance Support Program** are guaranteed access to health care through existing insurance schemes or negotiated agreements with local providers. AVSI nurtures community responses to nutrition and health needs, such as locally generated school feeding programs, and home-based care and counseling for malnutrition, HIV/AIDS and other diseases.

In **Nigeria**, the **St. Kizito Clinics** in Ilasan and Idi Araba in Lagos city are a primary health centers operated by AVSI and the Archdiocese of Lagos. Through its partnership with the Lagos University Teaching Hospital, St. Kizito has become a reference point for professional trainings and residencies for medical students. Over 300 patients visit the clinics every day.

In **South Sudan**, AVSI partners with the Catholic Diocese of Torit and the Ministry of Health in operating St. Theresa Catholic Hospital in Isohe and 9 satellite facilities in Eastern Equatoria State. Support includes expansion and renovation of facilities and capacity building of staff. A collaboration with **Massachusetts General Hospital** favors local maternal and infant health.

Environment, Water & Sanitation
Projects in Burundi, DR Congo, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda

AVSI has been active in the international community’s response to the water crisis, improving access to drinking water in emergency, post-conflict settings and rural areas with significant funding from the **Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA)** at USAID, the **European Union**, and the **Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs**. Boreholes, wells, pipes and infrastructure are put into place with community involvement, including education to water use and management. Leveraging its relationships with local communities, AVSI also coordinates with local authorities and partners with the private sector to promote reforestation and other projects to ensure the sustainable use of natural resources.

In **Rwanda**, a sustainable water capture-storage-distribution system has benefit 150,000 people with 125 miles of pipes laid since 2001 in the districts of Gicumbi, Kamonyi and Gatisbo. In Gatisbo, over 200,000 trees have been planted, providing food for local educational centers. As of 2012, AVSI is replicating the water supply intervention for 50,000 residents of Iringa Region in **Tanzania**.

In Equateur Province, **Democratic Republic of Congo**, AVSI is responsible for the reforestation of 2,470 acres of the Kokolopori reserve as one of the partners in the **Bonobo Peace Forest** project. The objectives are to safeguard biodiversity, protect the endangered bonobo species, foster rural community development and carbon sequestration according to the SSC A/R methodologies of the **Clean Development Mechanism (CDM)** within the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.
AVSI will always help communities respond to emergency needs as they arise within a long-term perspective of recovery and development. AVSI partners with other emergency responders, using the provision of basic supplies as a starting point, with attention to the psychosocial recovery and well-being, especially that of the most vulnerable. Drawing on the experience of the past decades, AVSI focuses the design, implementation and evaluation of interventions to favor the rebuilding of the human relationships in families, associations and communities which are vital for the return to stability. Through a multi-sector approach with heavy emphasis on education, AVSI accompanies individuals and communities as they start again after the movement, uncertainty and disruption of work usually caused by prolonged emergencies and the resulting lack of material goods and social and psychosocial breakdown.

In **South Sudan**, AVSI has been supporting Sudanese refugees through the distribution of NFIs and other emergency interventions since 2006. In 2011, a fruitful collaboration began with **UNHCR** to support IDPs arriving in Eastern Equatoria State from Khartoum.

In eastern **DR Congo**, AVSI collaborates with UNICEF on both the Rapid Response to the Movements of Populations (RRMP) and the Program of Expanded Assistance to Returns Plus (PEAR+) programs. The two complementary programs combine aspects of emergency support for the more vulnerable and reintegration of returning peoples in areas of increased security, representing a model for the transition out of conflict. Notable components are a new model of voucher-based fairs for NFI distribution and extensive education and protection activities.

In **Ivory Coast**, the "New Horizons" program co-financed by the European Union involves 4,300 young people, local educators, social workers and associations in educational, employment and sports activities in the north Abobo neighborhood of Abidjan to face recent outbreaks of violence.

The **MEO Centre in Bujumbura, Burundi**, has served families, children and orphans, since 2002, providing a community point of reference for positive change following the period of conflict.

Following over a decade of experience in physical and socio-economic upgrading in the slums of Brazilian cities and states (including Minas Gerais, Bahia and Pernambuco) through collaboration with government and international institutions including the World Bank and Cities Alliance, AVSI is now implementing the same methodology, targeting 5,500 families in the underserved Chamanculo C area of Maputo, **Mozambique**. The project is within a tri-lateral framework (Mozambique-Italy-Brazil) centering around Cities Alliance. AVSI will replicate its successful method of building on existing social capital by strengthening local associations and integrating the social development of the community into the infrastructure and upgrading interventions, adapting to the unique needs and context in Mozambique.
Economic Strengthening
Projects in Kenya, Mozambique, Rwanda, South Sudan, Uganda

AVSI is increasingly engaged in programming to support individual and household income generating potential as a means of improving well-being and of sustaining program impact over time. Concerned with the entire person and family unit, AVSI’s economic strengthening activities are always designed and implemented within a holistic framework, also seeking where possible significant spillover benefits such as increased food security, improved psycho-social well-being of parents and caretakers, and greater social cohesion. Programs range from vocational training for youth, family and community income generating activities, technical assistance and start-up capital for small businesses and cooperatives.

Vocational Training & Entrepreneurship

In Kenya, the Companionship of Works Association (CoWA) exemplifies the method of AVSI and its partners in helping community members find meaningful employment. The local NGO, registered in 2000, connects regional vocational training organizations and other partners in a network providing employment guidance and institutional links with employers. One such organization is St. Kizito Vocational Training Institute, opened in 1994, which addresses the prevalence of unemployment among the youth of Nairobi and surrounding areas. The Institute, with a branch in Githurai-Kimbo and one in Kibera opened in 2011, reaches over 350 students each year and over 90% of graduates pass the ministry exams.

In Rwanda, AVSI has collaborated with Education Development Center (EDC) to form a vocational training module Akazi kanoze to prepare over 500 youth in Gatisbo, Kamonyi, Ruhango, Nyanza and Gicumba Districts for work. Students are trained in carpentry, fashion, hospitality, hairdressing, mechanics, and other fields. Further projects accompany trainees into employment, for example through a partnership with CEFE International to help these young people develop business plans, obtain credit and follow up with capacity building. A growing partnership with the Rwandan Private Sector Federation places graduates of training in internships or full jobs.

In South Sudan, in collaboration with the Eastern Equatoria State Ministry of Education, AVSI constructed and now supports vocational training centers in Heyala and Imotong. Courses in bricklaying, tailoring and other trades are offered, along with small business start-up kits, to young entrepreneurs, promoting recovery and economic growth in the newly established nation.

In Sierra Leone, AVSI collaborated with the World Bank in a project to increase employment opportunities for youth, including those with disabilities, from 2007-2009.

Agriculture and Food Security

Connected to many of AVSI’s economic strengthening programs are components dedicated to agriculture and livestock production, both as a opportunities to generate income and to improve food security. In Burundi, projects in Kayanza and Ngozi province have resulted in reinforced capacity of 2 local associations and distribution of agricultural inputs accompanied with agro-pastoral training for 1,100 households. AVSI has also helped to strengthen agriculture-based businesses in Rwanda, including for those affected by HIV/AIDS, in North and South Kivu provinces of DR Congo, as well as in the Republic of Congo.
Emergency Response (1985-2007)

AVSI was involved throughout the civil conflict and displacement providing refugee camp management, water and sanitation infrastructure and management training, health care system strengthening, cross-cutting focus on access and quality of care for people with disabilities, education services, psychosocial and post-trauma support both directly and through training of a community of adults.

Recovery and Reconstruction (2006 to present):

Education and Social Development

The Livelihoods, Education and Protection (LEAP) project (2008-2011), followed the ORACLE project (2003-2007), both funded by the U.S. Department of Labor and implemented with the International Rescue Committee in the northern districts. **Goal**: To combat child labor giving at-risk youth opportunities to finish secondary school and pursue technical training and a path to self-employment.

Increased Access to Support for Orphans and Vulnerable Children in HIV-affected Communities (2005-2010), funded by PEPFAR through USAID and implemented in Uganda, Rwanda, Kenya and Ivory Coast. **Goal**: To support the most vulnerable children through a network of community based providers who ensure access to quality education and basic health care, and strengthen families.

Employment and Entrepreneurship

Through the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF) AVSI provided start-up grants and business skills training for small collective businesses. It was followed by the Stability, Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Uganda (SPRING) program (2007-2011), funded by USAID and implemented with Cardno Emerging Markets. **Goal**: To empower group businesses with little access to capital with training and start-up grants to strengthen income generating opportunities while building social capital and promoting stability.

Women’s Income Generation Support (WINGS) Program (2009-2012), funded by a private U.S. donor, and under evaluation by Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA). **Goal**: programatically, to provide tools that enable vulnerable women to expand business activities that improve economic and psychosocial stability and integration. In terms of research, to understand what kind of post-conflict aid works, why and how.

Integrated Programs and Family Strengthening

Sustainable Responses for Improving the Lives of Vulnerable Children and their Households (SCORE), funded by USAID (2011-2014). **Goal**: to strengthen families’ capacities to care and provide for their children through direct, personal relationships, promotion of household savings, agricultural skills-building and targeted investments, child protection initiatives, and improved referral systems.

Consistent, overarching focus on strengthening of local associations, institutions and schools through AVSI Distance Support Program and in partnership with the Permanent Center for Education.
A Brief History and Method

From the first seed of work in Congo and the youthful enthusiasm of a few volunteers, AVSI has consolidated and expanded field operations throughout Africa, with a focus on the Great Lakes region of East Africa. Since the mid-1980s, AVSI has been present in Uganda and Kenya, always following a method dictated by relationships and local resources. In 1994, AVSI was invited to Rwanda, building particularly on the experience gained in Uganda within the civil conflict and its impact on the population. Likewise, AVSI began activities in South Sudan following the relationship with thousands of Sudanese refugees into northern Uganda where AVSI managed refugee camps. The story has unfolded in the same way in Burundi. In West Africa, AVSI has been present in Nigeria since 1989 and Sierra Leone since 2002. An invitation by a donor agency prompted AVSI to open its doors in the Ivory Coast in 2008. Currently, AVSI staff and Distance Support Program partners in Ethiopia and Mozambique are responding to needs and opportunities for expansion.

Across the continent, AVSI is moved by a passion for the human being, rather than a drive to solve problems. The objective of all our efforts is to nurture an environment in which individuals, families and groups have the space, confidence and tools to be protagonists in their own lives. This means starting from one’s desire for happiness and truth, and subsequently taking the steps to build something. A person, and consequently a society, is awakened to these innate desires through a human relationship in which he/she is valued and hoped in. It is this encounter that makes the difference, putting into motion the capacity and creativity of the individual to use the tools of development, including policies, programs and financial investments, to work towards personal fulfillment and the common good. In this way, people are the main resource for the development of Africa.

AVSI Foundation, a non-profit, non-governmental organization with headquarters in Italy, is working in 40 countries across various sectors, with special attention to education, for the promotion of the dignity of the person, according to Catholic social teaching. AVSI has offices in New York City and Washington, DC, USA.

Local Partners

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<td>PNOEV (National Program for OVC)</td>
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<td>Ethiopia</td>
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<td>Kenya</td>
<td>Companionship of Works Association (CoWA); St. Kizito Vocational Training</td>
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<td>Institute; Little Prince Primary School; Cardinal Otunga Secondary School</td>
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<td>Mozambique</td>
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<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>The Seed Education Centre (Lagos); The New Seed (Taraba State);</td>
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<td>Archdiocese of Lagos; St. Kizito Clinics in Lekki, Idi-Araba</td>
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<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>Center Social St. Antoine; Health Care Center Ruhango; St. Joseph and Don</td>
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