



Solidarity in Action

Strategic Plan 2017 – 2021

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1. Introduction

SERVE's Strategic Plan for the five-year period 2017-2021 contains clear statements of the organisation's vision and mission and guiding values. It details how our Theory of Change informs our targeting, activities, outputs, objectives and progress to our broader goal: **People in vulnerable communities are better able to reach their potential and contribute to society.**

This Plan has been developed in consultation with our staff, partners and primary stakeholders and represents an evidence-based approach to development based on thorough situational analyses.

SERVE's new strategy represents a shift to a more programmatic approach and sets an agenda for growth over the coming five years. Alongside our development objectives we detail operational organisational objectives to ensure SERVE remains sustainable and relevant to those we aim to SERVE.

Word from the CEO

SERVE's Strategic Plan 2017 – 2021 builds on the efforts, expertise and experiences gained since the formation of SERVE in 2003. The knowledge gained through the delivery of successive volunteer programmes as well as through the various partnership based development programmes we have undertaken both informs this strategy and underpins our growth agenda.

This strategy's focus on access to education, in particular access to TVET (Technical Vocational and Educational Training) is I believe a statement of intent in relation to SERVE's continuing pledge to work with local partners to help identify and overcome barriers to education. SERVE has seen first-hand the way that education, and the improved livelihood prospects it brings can transform the lives of individuals, their families and the wider community.

SERVE also remains committed to advocating for, and work in partnership towards, the provision of adequate water, sanitation and health services for poor and marginalised communities with whom we work.

Through this strategic plan SERVE seeks to secure our future sustainability, and to ensure our development and growth we aim to do this by increasing and diversifying our income streams, expanding our work in the areas of development education and public engagement, raising public awareness and improving organisational capacity.

There is no doubt that delivering on this strategy will require immense amounts of work and dedication and that there will be many challenges, some foreseen others perhaps not. I am confident however that with the support of our donors, volunteers, partners and staff we can achieve the strategic objectives outlined.

Our Strategic Plan, SERVE Solidarity in Action represents a renewal of SERVE's original commitment to the service of those most in need, it reaffirms our promise of solidarity and reminds us of the shared human need for connection. These are the values that will continue to drive and inspire us.

Eileen Hoffler,

SERVE CEO

Word from the Chair of the Board

The SERVE Strategic Plan 2017-2021 is the next phase of our commitment to ‘Solidarity in Action’. The vulnerable communities that we serve through our partnership approach to development are challenged by chronically high levels of youth unemployment, poor access to primary education by vulnerable children and poor access to basic services.

Every effort will be made to resource and implement this plan so that we deliver concrete development outcomes for young people in poverty including out of school youth, people living with or at risk of HIV and people living with disabilities.

There are ambitious plans to provide high quality, market-relevant vocational and personal development training opportunities alongside business skills training and business start-up support. We will also deliver primary education opportunities and integrated community development initiative to improve access to basic services.

Building the capacity of our partners is central to this plan. SERVE’s reputation for delivering quality volunteering programmes is integral to our capacity building approach and to growing a constituency of supporters committed to ‘Solidarity in Action’ and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

We invite support and engagement from a range of stakeholders and supporters and partners so that this Strategic Plan is truly implemented through a partnership model benefiting up to 18,000 beneficiaries.

Gerard O’Connor

Chairperson

SERVE IN SOLIDARITY IRELAND

2. Vision, Mission and Values

SERVE is a development and volunteering organisation committed to tackling the root causes of poverty to achieve justice, equality and opportunities for all. Since 2003 SERVE has worked in solidarity with communities living in poverty, supporting initiatives in Southern Africa and South-East Asia.

Inspired by the belief that ‘Solidarity in Action’ can improve the lives of the most vulnerable, SERVE works in partnership with local communities and organisations. Our work is rooted in strategic cooperation with Irish communities at home and abroad. The organisation is incorporated in the Republic of Ireland under the Companies Act and is a registered charity with an objective to relieve third world poverty.

Our Vision

Everyone has an opportunity to realise his or her potential and make a meaningful contribution to society.

Our Mission

To work in partnership to strengthen the livelihoods of young people and communities living in poverty by providing high quality vocational and educational learning opportunities, helping young people gain employment or start and develop their own businesses.

Our Values

The Principle of Solidarity – our determination is to work to the good of all in a spirit of **mutual responsibility** in **participatory partnerships**, ensuring **local participation** and **ownership**, shared values, collaborative spirit and **mutual respect** underpinned by transparency and accountability.

A Commitment to Volunteering – SERVE volunteers are at the centre both of our development agenda and of our **engagement with the Irish public**.

A focus on Development Education and public engagement – plays a role in **increasing awareness** and understanding of the changing, interdependent and unequal world in which we live and the ways in which our **attitudes and actions** can make a difference to **disadvantaged people and vulnerable communities**.

3. Our Approach to Development

3.1. Context analysis and targeting

SERVE seeks to support the most vulnerable whilst also recognising that vulnerable communities exist everywhere and have sometimes been left exposed as the development community has withdrawn from countries in response to changing donor priorities. Further, SERVE has long-term partnerships and commitments in communities that need our continued support and we intend to support them in a sustainable way until they are enabled and empowered sufficiently to further their own development (see section 3.13 Sustainability and Exit Strategy).

We undergo context and needs analysis in all the countries in which we operate and these are reviewed and updated biennially. As a result, we focus our efforts on regions and communities where development indicators compare unfavourably with national standards.

We aim to ensure equality of access to the services we offer. Many of the most vulnerable people in the countries we work in live with disabilities. We consider disability as an issue critically important in terms of ensuring equal access to services and in programme design. Gender equality is also a mainstreaming theme for SERVE’s global programme (see Mainstreaming, section 3.9).

In the first two years of this 2017-21 strategy we will also develop detailed country strategic plans for each of our countries of operation. These strategic guiding documents will further build on the needs assessments already carried out and will define a specific approach aligned to our global strategy for each of our countries of operation.

Section 3.2 provides a brief overview of our countries of operation.

3.2. Priority Countries of Operation

SERVE’s development programme operates in Sub Saharan Africa focusing in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Namibia and in Asia, in India and the Philippines.

Mozambique

Population ¹ (million)	HDI rank ^{2,3} (out of 188)	Life expectancy ³	Poverty ratio ¹ (%)	GNI per capita (\$ PPP) ⁴
28	180 (low)	55	68.7%	\$1,123

¹ povertydata.worldbank.org/poverty/ accessed 05.05.16

² The Human Development Index is a composite statistic of life expectancy, education, and income per capita which are used to rank countries in terms of human development: undp.org/en/content/human-development-hdi

³ undp.org/en/composite/HDI accessed 06.05.16

⁴ Purchasing Power Parity (PPP), see undp.org/en/composite/HDI, accessed 05.05.16

Mozambique is ranked 180 out of 188 countries on the Human Development Index with two-thirds of the population living in poverty. Young people make up 21% of the population, most of whom do not complete secondary school. As a result, they face limited employment opportunities and poor access to market-orientated vocational training opportunities. Most young people are unskilled and engaged in the informal sector with low livelihood security. Youth unemployment is estimated at over 40%⁵. In Mozambique our development focus is on Technical Vocational Education and Training alongside Personal Development and Active Citizenship.

Zimbabwe

Population (million)	HDI rank (out of 188)	Life expectancy	Poverty ratio (%)	GNI per capita (\$ PPP)
16	155 (low)	58	72.3%	\$1,615

Zimbabwe is ranked at 155 out of 188 countries on the Human Development Index with 72% of the population living below the poverty line. Young people make up 22% of Zimbabwe's population and most leave secondary school early with few making it to third level education.⁶ Those that do finish their studies often find themselves unable to secure work.

Access to employment remains the biggest challenge for young people and adults - manufacturing and industry are in decline and the agriculture sector is weak. Whilst official youth unemployment is as low as 10%⁵ this masks huge underemployment. In Zimbabwe our development focus is also on Technical Vocational Education and Training alongside Personal Development and Active Citizenship.

Zambia

Population (million)	HDI rank (out of 188)	Life expectancy	Poverty ratio (%)	GNI per capita (\$ PPP)
16	139 (medium)	60	64.4%	\$3,734

Zambia is ranked at 139 out of 188 countries on the UN HDI with over 60% of the population living in poverty. Young people make up 20% of Zambia's population, and as in other countries in the region, unemployment and underemployment is the biggest challenge facing young people - more than 80% of employment in Zambia is nonwage⁷ and official youth unemployment is over 25%⁵. In Zambia our development focus is again on Technical Vocational Education and Training alongside Personal Development and Active Citizenship.

Namibia

Population (million)	HDI rank (out of 188)	Life expectancy	Poverty ratio (%)	GNI per capita (\$ PPP)
2.5	126 (medium)	65	22.6%	\$9,418

⁵ worldbank.org/indicator accessed 20.05.16

⁶ undp.org/en/countries/profiles/ZWE accessed 12.05.16

⁷ Zambia's Job Challenges, Realities on the Ground, World Bank, October 2013

Namibia is ranked at 126 out of 188 countries on the HDI. Despite a reduction in poverty in recent years, over 20% of the population remain in poverty and a relatively strong economy masks unequal income distributions and challenges around job creation - almost 40% of the youth population is unemployed⁵. In Namibia our development focus is on Technical Vocational Education and Training alongside Personal Development and Active Citizenship.

India

Population (million)	HDI rank (out of 188)	Life expectancy	Poverty ratio (%)	GNI per capita (\$ PPP)
1,311	130 (medium)	68	21.3%	\$5,497

India ranks at 130 out of 188 countries on the HDI. However, with a poverty ratio of over 20% the numbers of people living in poverty is staggering. The World Bank estimates that there are between 40-80 million people with a disability in India. Ninety per cent of children with disabilities in developing countries do not attend school and those that do rarely get beyond primary level, leading ultimately to lower employment and long-term poverty. Women with disabilities are multiply disadvantaged. Our work in India focuses on people with disabilities, in particular, improving access to basic education and other basic services.

Philippines

Population (million)	HDI rank	Life expectancy	Poverty ratio (%)	GNI per capita (\$ PPP)
100	115 (medium)	68	13.1%	\$7,915

The Philippines is ranked 115 out of 188 countries on the HDI. A relatively low poverty ratio of around 13% masks wide disparities in income and quality of life across regions, particularly in indigenous communities. The Badjao Tribe is an indigenous ethnic group who are traditionally nomadic, boat dwelling people who live off the sea relying on trading and subsistence fishing. They face widespread discrimination and marginalization and multiple challenges. The Badjao community is SERVE’s focus in the Philippines and our multi-sectoral work includes community development, human rights, education, health, livelihoods, and infrastructure development.

As part of our Consultancy Work with the Dublin Province of the Redemptorists (see section 3.14), SERVE retains an interest in working occasionally in South Africa and Brazil, where we have a track record of working with community based organisations on development work, volunteering and school Immersion Programmes.

In the coming five years of our strategic plan, from 2017 to 2021 we do not plan to expand into new countries. Rather we plan to consolidate our work and expand to support vulnerable communities within the countries where we currently have commitments in line with our new country specific strategic plans.

3.3. Theory of Change

SERVE's development programme is represented by our Theory of Change, which has been *developed together with our partners and primary stakeholders* to serve our 2017-21 strategy. Our Theory of Change is reviewed annually, during mid-term reviews and during programme evaluations. Our Theory of Change guides and focuses our programme design and implementation, ensuring it is consistent with our defined development problems, our approach and our intended results.

The developmental problems that we aim to address as part of our work have been determined through needs assessments in each country and region of operation. The problems we have defined include poor access to vocational (including personal development) training and a lack of employment opportunities for young people. Coupled with this, our partners often lack the resources to deliver services. We have also identified poor access to primary education by vulnerable children and poor access to basic services in vulnerable communities.

Our key target groups are young people in poverty including out of school youth, people living with or at risk of HIV and people with disabilities living in vulnerable communities. Our entry points for reaching our target groups are our partners, networks and government.

The steps that we engage in to bring about change (our activities) include providing high quality, market-relevant vocational and personal development training opportunities alongside business skills training and business start-up support. This is coupled with capacity building through skilled volunteer support, and funding opportunities for our partners. Additionally, we offer primary education opportunities and integrated community development initiatives to improve access to basic services. We encourage our partners to ensure that the needs of people with disabilities are considered and where possible specialist trainers are deployed.

As a result of our work, measurable outcomes include an increase in employment, self-employment and entrepreneurship; an increase in youth empowerment; an increase in income; improved standards of primary education and improved access to basic services in vulnerable communities. The improved capacity and sustainability of our partners is a further measurable outcome of our work.

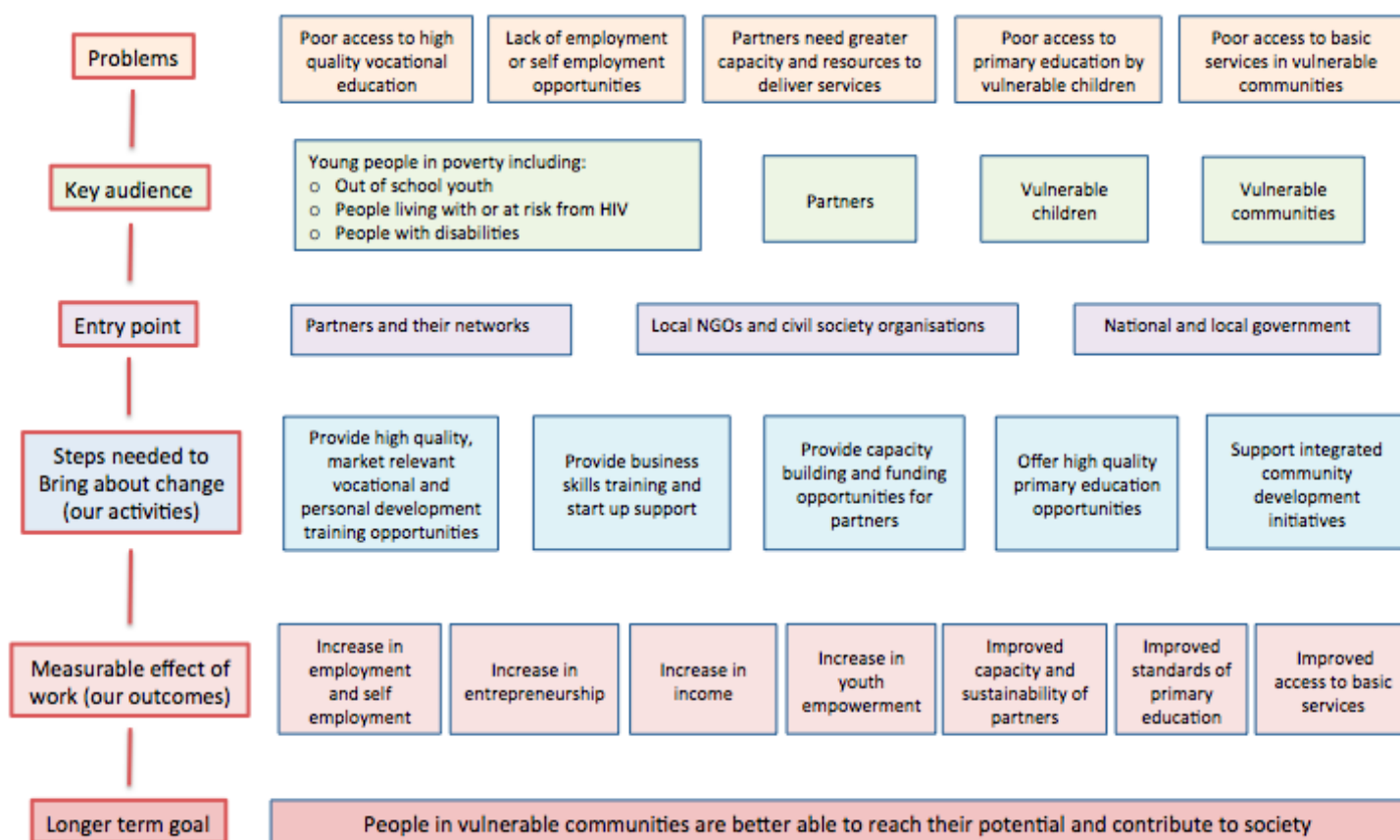
Our work also contributes to wider benefits, including improving the availability of skilled staff to local businesses, broader economic growth and job creation, all contributing to more secure, resilient communities.

Our measurable outcomes and their wider benefits together contribute to our broader development goal:

People in vulnerable communities are better able to reach their potential and contribute to society.

Our Theory of Change is summarised schematically in figure 1 below.

Fig. 1 SERVE's Theory of Change



3.4. Outcomes, Outputs and Activities

Our Theory of Change informs SERVE’s Results Based Framework, which is our key monitoring and evaluation tool for our global programme, with which all of our country programmes and individual projects are consistent.

Our broad development goal: ‘People in vulnerable communities are better able to reach their potential and contribute to society,’ is addressed through a number of outcomes, outputs and activities. These are fully defined and detailed in our Results Based Framework and summarised below.

Outcome 1: Increased employment, entrepreneurship and income

Measured by: Programme graduates gain employment or self-employment
 Startup of new businesses
 Graduates’ income

Outputs: Youth equipped with market-relevant vocational and technical skills
 Youth (or groups of youth) equipped with skills and resources to start businesses

Activities: Provide technical, vocational and educational training opportunities

Provide business skills training, mentoring, technical support and access to start-up grants
Provide job-readiness and preparatory training opportunities

Outcome 2: Increased youth and community empowerment

Measured by: Changes in knowledge, attitudes and practice towards health and wellbeing
Improvement in active citizenship

Outputs: Youth gain personal development skills across a range of topics

Activities: Provide opportunities to access personal development training

Outcome 3: Improved capacity and sustainability of our partners

Measured by: Improved capacity assessment scores
Increase in income

Outputs: Partners gain improved capacities in areas related to their development needs

Activities: Train and support partners through skilled volunteers
Provide restricted funding to partners

Outcome 4: Improved standard of primary education for vulnerable children

Measured by: Primary school attendance and completion rates
Progression to secondary school

Outputs: Children receive high quality primary education

Activities: Provide scholarships, grants and fee subsidies
Train teachers in pedagogical methodology focusing on vulnerable children
Support development of primary school infrastructure
Develop resource materials focusing on teaching children with disabilities

Outcome 5: Improved access to basic services in vulnerable communities

Measured by: Access to water and sanitation and basic health services

Outputs: Improved standard of basic services in vulnerable communities

Activities: Build or rehabilitate water facilities and sanitation infrastructure
Build or rehabilitate basic health service facilities

3.5. Technical Vocational Education and Training

SERVE's work in supporting access to high quality Technical Vocational Education and Training is guided by our TVET policy. There is an increasing recognition that Technical Vocational skills are critical in contributing to social inclusion, decent employment, and poverty reduction. The term refers to the acquisition of knowledge, competencies and attitudes necessary to perform a particular trade or occupation in the labour market. Lack of access to dignified employment and income-generating opportunities cuts to the heart of the development agenda.

The Sustainable Development Goals⁸ (SDGs), place great emphasis on TVET and the importance of improving young people's access to dignified employment, in particular, goal 4: "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all", and goal 8: "promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all". Both goals include specific targets related to TVET.

In order for TVET to be effective it must be context specific and market relevant; it must include personal development and active citizenship skills and it must be linked to actions that improve the employment and self-employment prospects of young people.

Another key consideration in the provision of TVET services is sustainability. For example, SERVE's partner, Young Africa, who work in Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Namibia, have developed an innovative and proven Franchise Model. Having made the initial investment in workshops and training equipment, buildings and equipment, each training department is then franchised to a local entrepreneur who runs the department as a business, paying rent to Young Africa, who recruit students and manage monthly fees. The income of the franchisee is supplemented with profits made from production and service provision to the market, which is incorporated into the training.

TVET has become the single biggest theme in SERVE's work and we expect our TVET focus to increase over the next five years of this strategic plan. Our work will involve providing funding support and capacity building to our partners engaged in TVET; developing standardised resources and toolkits; providing skilled volunteers to support our partners to deliver their programmes; promoting access for marginalised groups; and investing in monitoring, evaluation and learning systems.

As part of our work on Technical Vocational Education and Training we encourage our partners to ensure that the needs of people with disabilities are considered and where possible specialist trainers are deployed.

We will also increase the emphasis on advocacy, working with partners to identify realistic advocacy initiatives, building advocacy components into future programme funding and supporting partners in the implementation of advocacy initiatives. See section 3.11 for more on our planned advocacy initiatives.

⁸ sustainabledevelopment.un.org/

3.6. Business skills

SERVE, through partners, offers business skills courses aimed at stimulating entrepreneurship and business growth. These courses, developed by the International Labour Organisation, are part of the Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB) programme⁹, which is management-training focused on starting and improving small businesses as a strategy for creating more and better employment in developing economies and economies in transition.

With about six million trainees reached to date, and a growing network of trainers and master trainers in 2,500 partner institutions, SIYB is one of the biggest global management training systems on the market for the support of micro and small enterprises. Developed in the 1980s, it has been translated into more than 40 languages and introduced in more than 100 countries.

With a step-by-step approach the objectives are to enable local business trainers to implement business start-up and improvement training and to enable potential and existing small entrepreneurs to start viable businesses, to increase the viability of existing enterprises, and to create quality employment for others in the process.

We offer three discrete courses under the SIYB programme:

Generate Your Business Idea – a two-day course for anyone who wants to see whether they can make the start of a micro or small-scale business feasible.

Start Your Business – a five-day training programme for starting entrepreneurs who have a feasible business idea for their own small enterprise. The training helps in developing a detailed business plan and to actually get started.

Improve Your Business – a seven-day training programme for emerging entrepreneurs running small enterprises that want to sustain their businesses, increase sales and reduce costs.

3.7. Personal Development and Active Citizenship

Personal development and active citizenship (also known as Life Skills) is based around a tried and tested course that has been delivered to over 10,000 youth. Personal development training is an essential part of our mission to offer young people integral development: teaching skills of the hand to be self-reliant, skills of the heart and mind to live with dignity and skills of the soul to live with purpose. All lessons have been tried and tested and the students are co-creators of their own learning process. The lessons are therefore interactive and encourage young people to share their views, ideas and experiences.

The programme comprises 30 lessons covering topics including goal-setting, building self-confidence, taking responsibility, HIV/AIDS, communication, empathy, relationships, sexuality, love, gender, standing up for yourself, social awareness and citizenship, leadership, human rights, domestic violence, norms and values, creation of the ideal society, national budget awareness and a simulation game on the impact of war and peace. The life skills method encompasses different learning objectives, appealing to students to look at their qualities and characteristics, be agents of change, create awareness or take action.

⁹ Summaries of all course materials are available at: ilo.org/start-and-improve-your-business, accessed 9th March 2016

In several evaluations the impact has been highly positive and employers have also indicated that the course contributes to the employability of young people.

3.8. Volunteering

SERVE has a strong reputation around volunteering for development and one of our key commitments is to place skilled and experienced Irish volunteers in demand-driven and results-based volunteering positions in our programmes on a short-term (4 weeks), long-term (6 months - 2 years) and immersion basis (10-14 days).

Since 2003, when we first sent 12 Irish volunteers to the Philippines, we have trained and placed over 850 skilled, experienced Irish volunteers with our partners. Since 2008 we have also been working with secondary schools, offering school immersion projects of 10-14 days. To date we have placed over 220 Irish students and teachers with our overseas partners.

All of our volunteering initiatives are planned in close collaboration with our partners, volunteers providing expertise in areas relevant to our development programme along with small scale funding for programme implementation.

During the course of this strategic plan we will continue with our volunteering initiative across all of our countries of operation, optimising the number of volunteering assignments to support our partners in their work. During 2017 we intend to send 95 volunteers to our countries of operation, with this number increasing in line with our strategic growth.

Our approach to volunteering is governed by our comprehensive Volunteer Programme Policy and Procedures, which were developed as a creative response to the Irish Government's Volunteer 21 initiative¹⁰. We promote best practice in volunteering through the Code of Good Practice for Sending Organisations¹¹ and the Volunteer Charter for volunteers¹²

All SERVE volunteers are engaged in a survey to assess changes in their knowledge, attitudes and practices with respect to international development issues. Returned volunteers contribute hugely to our development education agenda, engaging with the Irish public and giving talks on their experiences during their placements. See Section 6 on or development education work and engagement with the Irish public.

3.9. Mainstreaming Gender and HIV/AIDS

Gender and HIV/AIDS are the themes that we ensure are considered across all of our work and are integrated into the design of our policies and programmes for the 2017-21 period. This is detailed fully in our Mainstreaming Policy.

Gender Equality

¹⁰ irishaid.ie/get-involved/volunteering/information-on-volunteering/

¹¹ comhlamh.org/code-of-good-practice accessed 10.05.16

¹² www.comhlamh.org/volunteer-charter-2/

SERVE is committed to contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals¹³, in particular SDG 5, to ‘achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls’. Gender discrimination remains pervasive in many of the communities we serve. Girls commonly disproportionately miss out on schooling and household decision-making is often a male role with assets unfairly distributed. In some cases, domestic violence is a regular feature of daily life. The consequences of gender inequality are as significant for children as for women.

We ensure both women and men are consulted and their views heard during programme design, planning, and monitoring and evaluation to ensure their needs and priorities are understood and responded to.

For example, when we support vocational training programmes we ensure that training providers offer opportunities for women and men equally. We also encourage providers to offer market relevant training to girls and women, and encourage them to think beyond traditional courses for girls, such as tailoring and hairdressing. We also ensure they provide crèche facilities and locate services in areas that can be easily reached by young women.

When it comes to monitoring and evaluation our objectives and indicators reflect the anticipated changes and benefits for women and men and we ensure that data is disaggregated so we are able to monitor the impact of our work on both men and women.

HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS remains a significant threat to the health of marginalised young people in the areas we work, with young women particularly vulnerable. Young people in vulnerable circumstances are at greater risk of making poor decisions about their sexual health, placing them at risk of infection.

Alongside the trainings that we offer to help young people secure employment and generate income, we place equal importance on investing in personal development skills, including basic sexual health advice, which help young people make decisions.

Accordingly, our programmes are informed by an HIV/AIDS situational analysis. Partners also develop HIV and AIDS workplace policy documents in line with national policy and legislation.

Depending on the need, our programmes incorporate voluntary counseling and testing, testing and treatment of sexually transmitted infections and referral to specialist care as needed. In some cases, we also engage in community awareness to tackle stigma and discrimination.

3.10. Resilience

Resilience to SERVE means ‘the capacity to monitor, anticipate, respond to and manage known risks as well as uncertainties to inform effective decision-making’ (Inter-agency Resilience Working Group 2012¹⁴) and is a multi-dimensional, dynamic concept. In this respect Resilience is closely related to challenges faced by vulnerable communities that are caused by climate change. For example, farmers in many areas are no longer able to predict when the rains will come and hence the best time to plant seeds, which therefore threatens their food security.

¹³ sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs

¹⁴ Found at technicalconsortium.org/The-Characteristics-of-Res-Building.pdf accessed 09.05.16

The components of resilience that we improve include income, access to food, access to basic services and assets. All of these factors are enhanced by SERVE's programmatic approach to development and all of our development outcomes contribute to improved resilience of the communities in which we work.

Our understanding of the shocks and stresses affecting our target communities is gained from our detailed needs analysis that informs our programme design, and by ensuring that our beneficiaries are well represented and able to inform programme review procedures.

3.11. Advocacy

To SERVE advocacy is a process of supporting and enabling people to express their views and concerns, access information and services, defend and promote their rights and responsibilities and explore choices and options. Advocacy includes organizing, lobbying and campaigning and is an evidence-based process that directly and indirectly influences decision makers, stakeholders and other relevant audiences to support and implement actions that contribute to improving the opportunities of our target groups to realise their potential and make a meaningful contribution to society.

Advocacy initiatives run alongside our other interventions, particularly our work in TVET. Our priority focus during the period of this strategic plan will include supporting coalitions focusing on:

- Encouraging the **private sector** to provide **training opportunities** for **unemployed youth** as part of their corporate social responsibility.
- Working with **government** to improve the **accreditation** of market relevant training opportunities.
- Working with the **private and public sector** to ensure that TVET is **market-relevant** and demand driven.
- Sharing of **success stories** with the community to help **challenge mindsets and stigma** around **girls and people with disability** accessing TVET.
- **Engaging** with **young people** on the **challenges they face** to help influence their decision making.

During the first year of our Strategic Plan 2017-2021 we will work closely with partners to further develop our advocacy strategy, agreeing outcomes and key activities along with associated indicators.

3.12. Our partners and how we work with them

SERVE works solely through partnership with local organisations. Each partnership is governed by a Partnership Agreement, typically reviewed and renewed after 3 years. All partners are independent of SERVE and have their own local governance structures. Although some partners are financially reliant on SERVE our aim is that our partners have diverse funding platforms. The

way we approach partnerships is detailed fully in our Partnership Approach to Development policy.

Our Partners

We currently work closely with a number of key partners. As we grow our programme during our 2017-2021 strategic plan we will seek similar partners to help us expand our work and respond to our newly developed country specific strategies.

In Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Namibia our key partner is Young Africa and our key focus is Technical Vocational Education and Training including Personal Development and Business Skills.

In Zimbabwe we also work with the Mavambo Trust on a programme providing holistic care for orphans and vulnerable children including primary education support.

In Zambia we also work with St. Bakhita's Association to develop their community based youth programmes in the areas of education, youth work, sports and art.

In India we partner with national organisations: The Association of People with Disability, Sumanahalli, Morning Star and Jyothi Seva on programmes supporting people with disabilities including education, health, TVET, advocacy, HIV/AIDS, education and housing.

In the Philippines we work with the Presentation Sisters and the Redemptorists on community development initiatives with the Badjao Tribe and are committed to helping our partners who regularly suffer the impact of natural disasters.

In Ireland, SERVE works with the Dublin Province of the Redemptorists to provide project cycle management support on a number of their development programmes. SERVE enters into partnerships with schools and communities interested in overseas volunteering opportunities and development education. SERVE is also an active participant in the - Comhlamh and Dochas network groups.

As resources become available during the course of this strategic plan period, we will identify new partnership to help us expand our work through referrals from existing partners, by responding to request from like-minded organizations, and through proactively seeking partners with strategies in synergy with our own. We will conduct initial assessments of potential partners, focusing on similar values and ethos, their aims and priorities and their current capacity. We seek to work to support smaller indigenous NGOs where possible and will consider establishing new partnerships as resources permit.

Our Approach to Partnership

To SERVE partnership involves a shared vision and a commitment to work together to bring sustainable benefits to poor and marginalised communities. It requires a long-term commitment, clearly defined expectations and shared responsibility for achievements. We value the unique contribution and strengths of all partners and conduct our partnerships in an open, accountable and transparent manner.

The relationship between SERVE and its existing and future partners in the developing world is at the heart of our work. Our principles that define our partnerships and will also guide us in developing new partnerships during our 2017-2021 strategy include:

Local ownership: Partnership is about who owns the development process, enabling people to solve their own problems.

Sustainability: Sustainable change is more likely to be achieved by local stakeholders through the development of local partners.

Mutual benefits and learning: Partnership is about dialogue, exchange, mutual learning, organizational development and strengthening.

Cost-effectiveness: Partnership has the potential to be more cost-effective by sharing resources and avoiding duplication of efforts as well as by establishing models of good practice for learning and replication.

Networking and alliance building: Partnership can facilitate networking and the formation of strategic alliances.

SERVE's work with our key partners includes capacity building to support programme delivery. This is detailed fully in our Organisational Capacity Building Policy. A participatory and consultative organisation assessment informs our capacity building work, and generally focuses on governance, management and organisation and grant management.

Capacity building involves helping to strengthen the organisation in identified areas. Support may include funding of core costs, training, advice and support through field visits, distance advice and support, and support and funding for partners to source capacity building locally. The result of capacity building initiatives is assessed using partner capacity score frameworks, detailed in our Partnerships Policy.

3.13. Sustainability and Exit Strategy

Our approach to sustainability is guided by our needs assessments and evaluation of our outcomes and goal. Our work is conducted through local partners, with a heavy emphasis on building local capacity. We work closely with our partners and target communities to agree how long our support is needed and what will guide decisions about withdrawal of support.

Our three key approaches to transition include gradually phasing down: reducing partnership activities over a period of time; phasing over: transferring partnership activities to local institutions or communities; and phasing out or withdrawing from the partnership. These are further detailed in our 'Exit Policy for Partnerships'.

3.14. Our Consultancy Work

In addition to our core development programming we are sometimes approached to provide consultancy support to other organisations implementing projects that are aligned and consistent with our strategy. For example, we offer a development resource service to the Dublin

Province of the Redemptorists, strengthening their development programme by building their capacity to plan strategically, prepare funding proposals, monitor projects and complete reporting processes. During the period of this five-year strategic plan, we will continue to make these services available, subject to staff availability and where our client's work is contributing to our overall strategy to support vulnerable communities.

4. Monitoring and Evaluation

Section 3.3 and 3.4 above detail our Theory of Change and how this links to our Results Based Framework. These two documents represent our overarching framework for monitoring, evaluation and learning. All of our existing projects contribute to our overall strategy and individual project logical frameworks are consistent with the structure and content of our global policies.

To SERVE our development results, or outcomes, are central to our planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. We always ensure that we identify or collect baseline data prior to the start of a development intervention and we work closely with partners to identify when and how subsequent measurements will be made to measure progress.

Our detailed approach to monitoring and evaluation is detailed in our Results Based Management Guidelines and Monitoring and Evaluation Policy.

Monitoring and Evaluation is also a key focus of SERVE's approach to capacity building, outlined above in section 3.12. During our Strategic Plan 2017-21 we will prioritise building capacity in Monitoring and Evaluation both internally and within partner organisations. SERVE will utilise external expertise in Ireland, Africa and Asia to ensure that staff and partners have access to the highest quality training in monitoring and evaluation systems and that this translates into rigorous assessments and analysis of our work and its impact.

5. Organisational Sustainability

5.1 Accountability

SERVE's Board of Directors is ultimately accountable for the governance and functioning of SERVE. The Chief Executive Officer assumes delegated responsibility for accountability to all stakeholders including members, beneficiaries, solidarity groups, employees, volunteers, partners, donors, the Irish public and regulatory authorities. Directors ensure adherence to all legal and regulatory requirements applicable to SERVE's activities.

SERVE has adopted the Dóchas Code of Conduct on Images and Messages, Irish Development NGOs Code of Corporate Governance (2008), The Code of Practice for Good Governance of Community, Voluntary and Charitable (CVC) Organisations in Ireland (2012) and the Comhlamh Code of Best Practice for Volunteering (2013).

Primarily we consider ourselves accountable to those we aim to serve: people living in poverty and vulnerable communities. We aim to put our primary stakeholders at the center of all we do, ensuring they define and determine the work we do together, and are an integral part of monitoring and evaluation of our work.

5.2 Governance

Governance issues in SERVE are defined in our Governance Policy, including organisational leadership and human resources, legal and financial controls and compliance, transparency and accountability, operational management and various codes of conduct.

SERVE's Board of Directors approves, and ensures compliance with SERVE's governing policies including our Advocacy Policy (2015), Capacity Building Policy (2015), Child Protection Policy (2011), Complaints Policy for Partners (2015), Conflict of Interest Policy (2014), Exit Strategy (2016), Finance Policy and Procedures (2012), Governance Manual (2014), Health, Safety and Security Policy (2011), Immersion Programme Policy (2015), Mainstreaming Policy (2016), Monitoring and Evaluation Policy (2015), Partnership Policy (2015), Results Based Management Guidelines (2015), Risk Management Policy (2013), Solidarity Programme Volunteering Policy (2015), Technical Vocational Education and Training Policy (2015), Volunteer Programme Policy and Procedure (2015), Employee Handbook (2007) and Volunteer Programme Policy (2012).

Further, the Board of Directors is responsible for approving this 2017-2021 Strategic Plan along with its related documents, our Theory of Change and Results Based Framework.

5.3 Financial and risk management

SERVE ensures high levels of management and control over all financial aspects of the organisation including the annual budget process, annual accounts and grant management. The Board of Directors has appointed a sub-committee for Audit, which oversees the organisation's finances as well as risk management. The Board also approves the annual budgets, engages an external auditor to audit SERVE'S accounts, approves all non-programmed expenditure greater than €20,000, sets the remuneration of all staff and approves any major changes to the budget.

Risk management is an integral part of SERVE’s approach to planning, decision-making and accountability. The Board of Directors has delegated the responsibility of risk management and adopting appropriate risk strategies to the Audit Sub-Committee. Our Risk Policy is reviewed annually and identifies key risk levels and probability alongside mitigating actions. The Risk Management Framework incorporates governance and management of SERVE, capacity building of partners, our development programme, our volunteering programme and child safeguarding.

5.4 Fundraising

SERVE’s income in 2016, the year prior to the start of this Strategic Plan is €650,000. SERVE is a recipient of Irish Aid programme funding as well as Mísean Cara funding. SERVE also receives funds from Electric Aid, the Edmund Rice Trust Fund, the JP McManus Fund, Galway County Council, the Teachers Union of Ireland and other similar sources, as well as through a broad range of annual fundraising initiatives.

SERVE volunteers are an important source of income for our development programme. In addition to their own costs, SERVE volunteers launch fundraising initiatives around Ireland in support of the programme they contribute to. Our development education commitments (see section 6) will be important in the coming five years in terms of convincing the Irish public of the importance of our work and our achievements.

SERVE is committed to a programme of fundraising in support of our current and future programmes. Institutional fundraising is managed by the SERVE team, in conjunction with partners in our countries of operations. We aim to ensure a diverse funding platform closely linked to our needs assessments and communications work.

For the coming period 2017-2021 we have set ambitious fundraising targets to expand our programme within the countries we work. Table 1 below sets out our targets for both unrestricted and restricted funding over this period.

Table 1. Fundraising targets 2017-2021

	2017 (€)	2018 (€)	2019 (€)	2020 (€)	2021 (€)
Unrestricted	251,250	314,063	392,578	490,723	613,403
Restricted	564,200	733,460	953,498	1,239,547	1,611,412
TOTAL	815,450	1,047,523	1,346,076	1,730,270	2,224,815

5.5 Marketing and Communication

Marketing and Communications will be a key focus for SERVE during the coming five-year period of this strategic plan. Our objective to enhance our profile (section 8) as well as grow sustainably will be supported by an effective Marketing and Communications strategy.

During the first year of our 2017-2021 strategy we will develop a thorough Marketing and Communications Plan, determining our audiences and key messages. This will be supported by a

new Customer Relationship Management database to enable us to plan and track our developing networks.

We will then work through a process of redeveloping our marketing material; our online presence including our website and social media activity; our branding and public image, including our logo; and our approach to case studies and success stories that highlight and showcase our work.

6 Engaging with the Irish Public

Engaging with the Irish public is a core part of our work and central to sustaining support for our mission, ensuring the public understands what we are doing and what changes as a result of our work. There are two key areas to our engagement with the Irish public: Development Education and engaging with the public and the media.

6.1 Development Education

SERVE is committed to Development Education, which is critical in increasing awareness and understanding of Ireland's role in international development. Our development education programme includes a number of interrelated elements:

Engaging with volunteers

We manage up to 100 volunteer placements annually and engage with volunteers on development issues prior to departure, during their placement, and on their return to Ireland. In addition, we conduct Knowledge, Attitude and Practice surveys with our volunteer before and after their service, to ascertain how their views have changed as a result of their experiences.

Immersion Programme

Our Immersion Programme provides Irish youth with an experience of life in developing countries and promotes solidarity with the poorest people in the world. The programme is open to partnership with organisations within the Irish Youth Sector, primarily schools and youth clubs. The immersion programme can target youth attending Scala trainings in leadership (see below). Since 2013, an average of 32 young people per year were engaged in our immersion programme and we will maintain this average figure during the five years of our strategic plan.

Meitheal Programme

Our SERVE office in Cork is located on the grounds of the Scala Retreat and Conference Centre. Each year the Meitheal Youth Leadership Programme trains over 200 students from over 20 schools in leadership skills, with core values of justice, compassion and humility. Groups of youth undertake a week of training aimed at empowering them to become leaders in their own school community. We engage closely with these youth, providing development education opportunities and offering spaces on the immersion programme.

Development Education Material

In addition to using external resource material, SERVE produces development education material for use in classrooms and with young people, along with associated teachers' and leaders' resource material. The leaders' resource material includes country specific development education activities to engage volunteers in learning to provide context to their placements. For example, in Mozambique the learning is around youth, unemployment and education; in India learning includes disability, leprosy, HIV and gender.

We provide participatory workshops that give volunteers an understanding of these issues, developed in response to the Dochas Code of Conduct on Images and Messages as well as

guidelines for a video project about specific Sustainable Development Goals relating to the work of our partners in the majority world.

Development education workshops are also developed by SERVE for use in schools participating in SERVE School Immersion Programmes.

SERVE's resources are also shared with SERVE volunteers who are teachers by profession and have shown an interest in delivering development education workshops with their students.

All four elements of our development education work will continue through the coming five years of this plan.

6.2 Public talks and engaging the media

For SERVE there is considerable overlap between our development education work and engaging with the Irish public. Primarily this is because of the role of our volunteers, particularly on return from their placement. We train volunteers to be able to give presentations in schools, colleges, parishes, communities and workplaces and volunteers are asked to prepare and deliver an education programme on a specific theme related to their placement. *We estimate that we reach 8,000 people annually through returned volunteers.*

Additionally, our staff regularly organise public talks and publish media articles on our work.

7 Contribution and Alignment to Ireland's development policies

As an Irish organisation SERVE supports and contributes to Ireland's commitment to international development. Ireland's vision of '*a sustainable and just world, where people are empowered to overcome poverty and hunger and fully realise their rights and potential*' is closely aligned to SERVE's own vision.

*One World, One Future*¹⁵, Ireland's Policy for International Development, sets out three goals, all of which are consistent with SERVE's Strategic Plan for 2017-2021 and addressed in our Theory of Change and Results Based Framework. These are:

1. Reduced hunger, stronger resilience
2. Sustainable development, inclusive economic growth
3. Better governance, human rights and accountability

Our priorities are also aligned to the six priority areas for action identified in *One World, One Future*. In particular, our focus on livelihoods and basic services contributes to addressing Global Hunger, Climate Change and Development, Trade and Economic Growth and Essential Services.

Our Strategic Plan is also aligned to Irish Aid's Framework for Action¹⁶, in particular several of our interventions contribute directly to result areas identified under Irish Aid's goals and higher level outcomes, in particular: improving employment opportunities, increasing income, improving capacity to improve food and nutrition security, and improving equal access to quality essential services.

Our strategy is also broadly consistent with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's Africa Strategy¹⁷. In particular, the 'Department is committed to promoting environmentally sustainable development that is consistent with the needs and priorities of people in developing countries and which contributes to the eradication of poverty.'

Ireland is also committed to the Sustainable Development Goals¹³ to which our development programme contributes, in particular those related to ending poverty and hunger (1 and 2), good health and well-being (3), quality education (4), gender equality (5), clean water and sanitation (6), decent work and economic growth (8), reduced inequalities (10), sustainable cities and communities (11) and partnerships for the goals (17).

¹⁵ www.irishaid.ie/media/One-World-One-Future

¹⁶ www.irishaid.ie/media/Action-for-Framework

¹⁷ www.irishaid.ie/media/africa-strategy.pdf

8 Operational Objectives

Our 2017-2021 Strategic Plan sets us on a path to significantly increase our impact on the lives of poor and marginalised people. The plan sets out how we will achieve this over the next five years. Together with our partners and volunteers, we will bring people together so that we respond in the most effective way possible to the needs of the people we aim to serve.

Our development objectives will be supported by our operational objectives. A blend of key performance indicators for our operational objectives casts light on our work in a meaningful and credible way. Their targets and milestones are detailed further in our Results Based Framework alongside our development objectives. These targets will change as we review progress and re-plan. Some objectives are emerging and need further research and planning to make them possible. Where this is the case, a milestone is in place indicating step changes in organisational capability to help us achieve the objectives in the year ahead. These will be reviewed quarterly.

Our long-term goal is that SERVE is a high profile, sustainable and resilient organisation, with the capacity to grow and enhance the services we offer to our primary stakeholders. Our operational objectives in support of our development programme together with key performance indicators are shown below.

1. Provide SERVE's partners with a growing range of support

- Number of international volunteers and volunteer days
- Funding provided to partners
- Number of partners who feel they are contributing to the shaping of SERVE's development programme and that SERVE is responding to their needs
- Number of new partnerships established
- Development of country strategic plans
- Development of partner capacity score framework
- Development of advocacy strategy

2. Increase our global income

- Increase in restricted donor funding
- Increase in donor diversity
- Increase in unrestricted funding

3. Expand our work in Development Education

- Number of students participating in SERVE's immersion programme
- Number of students reached through the Meitheal programme
- Number of solidarity groups established and maintained

4. Strengthen our engagement with the Irish public

- Number of returned volunteer talks
- Number of public engaged through returned volunteer talks

- Public talks by SERVE staff
- Media articles about SERVE's work published

5. Improve our profile through effective marketing and communications

- Development of marketing and communications strategy including Customer Relationship Management database.
- Higher profile of organisation – % of people who have heard of SERVE's work

Strengthening SERVE

Our ambition to grow during the period 2017-2021 will only be achieved alongside internal strengthening of our organisation across areas including technical skills, financial and project management and governance. To achieve our goals, SERVE will be run by staff who are experts in best practice in the development sector so that they can engage confidently and effectively with partner organisations and others in the sector.

During the first year of our Strategic Plan we will develop a comprehensive Organisational Capacity Building Plan, to address our internal needs.

As we grow, we will assess our staffing structure, ensuring that we have adequate numbers of appropriately qualified staff. We will also ensure our personal development planning is closely linked to performance review processes, and develop training programmes for staff members so they are equipped and confident to deliver the best possible results for the organisation and our primary stakeholders.

We will strengthen our thematic organisational policies in line with our key programming priorities and will work closely with partners and others in the sector to do so.