



# STRATEGY

2024-2028

*SERVE: Solidarity in Action*

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**[www.SERVE.ie](http://www.SERVE.ie)**

SERVE in Solidarity Ireland is a company limited by guarantee and not having a share capital.

Registered office in Cork is Scala, Castle Road, Blackrock, Cork and No:419696

Registered office in Clonard Gardens, Belfast, BT13 2RL and NI073601

Charity No: CHY 18154 (ROI) / XT16752 (NI)

# INTRODUCING SERVE

## INTRODUCING SERVE

### MESSAGE FROM BOARD CHAIR

At the time of launching this strategy SERVE has just celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, a momentous and energizing milestone.

SERVE defines itself as an organisation centred around young people and this strategy concentrates on supporting opportunity for marginalised young people and addressing barriers that prevent them from thriving. Despite the many impediments they face, we believe in the limitless potential of young people and choose to focus on them as the key to a brighter future for their communities and our world.

Financial and livelihood security and independence is the highest concern for young people today across our countries of operation. SERVE's long-term focus on strengthening the livelihoods and wellbeing of young people living in poverty, particularly through accessible and holistic Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), remains entirely relevant and will remain a focus of our development partnerships. We will place increased emphasis on making opportunities more accessible and equitable to the most marginalised, especially young women, rural youth and people with disabilities. We will integrate initiatives focused on climate justice into all our programmes and partnerships.

SERVE will expand its work on youth voice and agency, so that discrimination and exclusion of young people, especially the most marginalised, is reduced. We will focus on enabling young people to become active in challenging inequality and injustice and participating in decisions that affect their lives. We will innovate, test new approaches and focus on seeking solutions for those who are furthest behind.

We will seek out new approaches to develop meaningful connection and engagement with young people in Ireland, so that they are better informed and more actively engaged on social justice, human rights and global development issues. We will continue to demonstrate leadership in implementation of responsible and progressive volunteering models.

Underpinning this will be continuous investment in SERVE structures and systems ensuring that SERVE is an effective, accountable and result-oriented in all that we do, maintaining our track record for strong governance.

***We invite you to join us in realizing this ambitious strategy.***

### WHO WE ARE

SERVE is a development and volunteering organisation committed to tackling poverty in the developing world.

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. SERVE is registered as a charity under Republic of Ireland law and UK/Ni law. Our principal office is in Cork.

# INTRODUCING SERVE

Since 2003, SERVE has supported initiatives in Southern Africa, South East Asia and South America. Our development programmes have had a strong focus on helping young people gain employment or start and develop their businesses, offering high-quality and holistic vocational and educational learning opportunities.

Since 2003, SERVE has placed over 1,200 volunteers on overseas assignments and contributed over €20 million to development projects.



# HIGHLIGHTS FROM SERVE PERFORMANCE IN RECENT YEARS

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM SERVE PERFORMANCE IN RECENT YEARS

### KEY ACHIEVEMENTS AND RESULTS DELIVERED BY SERVE OVER THE PERIOD 2019-22

This strategy has been informed by stakeholder consultation and an internal review of progress during our last strategic period. Key achievements have been summarised into the following four areas:

1. **We made a difference in the lives of 10,000 young people**, supporting their economic and emotional resilience through technical and vocational training, lifeskills support, scholarships, and youth leadership. As a result, more young people are in employment, economically active, with improved incomes and greater confidence in themselves and their future prospects<sup>1</sup>.
2. **We contributed to strengthening organisational capacity within SERVE, and sustainability of our partners in areas related to their development needs.** During this phase, SERVE provided funding of over €1.8 million to 8 partners in Africa and Asia. Approx 90% of this flowed directly to partners.
3. **Our approach to GCE and volunteering evolved and strengthened.** We trialed and implemented new, more integrated and creative approaches in response to changes in the operating context. Over the last 20 years, more than 1200 people have volunteered with SERVE, including through our summer programmes and school immersion programmes (both overseas) and our new, Ireland-based volunteer programmes.
4. **We strengthened organisationally and built our reputation in the sector.** Improvements included new staff roles, enhanced governance structures (including a new constitution, board renewal and strengthened compliance), new administration and fundraising systems and enhanced communications. We secured new funders (EU) and new funding streams (GCE funding from Irish Aid) –important signs of recognition of our work.

#### CURRENT PROGRAMMES

##### Skills for Youth Resilience Programme (SYRP) 2021-24

Implemented with our partner Young Africa in Zimbabwe and Mozambique

Funded by Irish Aid Civil Society Fund

##### Think Global Act Local (TGAL) GCE programme

Implemented with schools and communities in Ireland

Funded by Irish Aid (2023)

##### Digital Vocational Education and Training for Young Africans (D-VETYA) 2023-2024

Implemented in partnership with Young Africa in Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Zambia and Namibia

Funded by the EU

<sup>1</sup> Based on data from main countries of focus (Mozambique, Zimbabwe) from 2019-2022.

# HIGHLIGHTS FROM SERVE PERFORMANCE IN RECENT YEARS

SERVE has identified several factors that enabled this strong performance and that we will continue to build on in this new strategic period:

1. **The strength of our partnership model**, founded on long-term, respectful, trusting, locally-driven partnerships.
2. **A flexible and agile way of working and mindset**, allowing SERVE to respond rapidly and energetically to changes in context and to support areas of need and/or gaps identified by our partners, towards long-term gain.
3. **A substantial network of experienced, returned volunteers** with GCE knowledge who give their time and expertise to SERVE (for fundraising, outreach, GCE, internship, volunteer team leadership, board membership etc.) and remain committed to our organisation.
4. **Growing relationships with domestic organisations, schools and groups**, allowing SERVE to expand its GCE / volunteering model and reach new audiences
5. **A committed and dedicated team**, enhanced by the expansive skills and experience of our staff and board members.

We recognise several challenges that we need to address in the coming period. This includes a need to expand our partner base; to modify our reliance on overseas volunteering, both as a source of unrestricted funds and as a conduit for bringing fresh energy and audiences to our organisation; to build visibility of our organisation and its work; and to better connect the work we do overseas and at home.

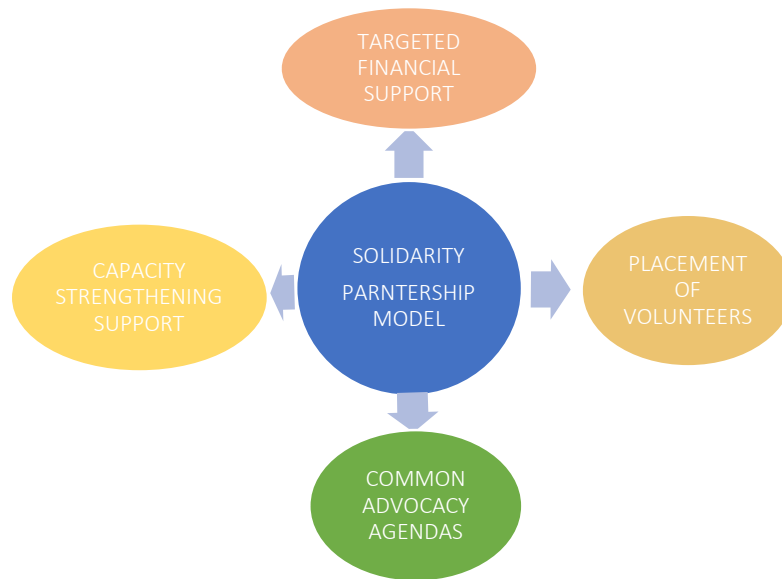




# HOW WE WORK

## HOW WE WORK

### PARTNERSHIP APPROACH



SERVE's approach is characterised by partnership, working in solidarity with individuals, communities, and organisations that share the same goal of reducing vulnerability and improving development outcomes for the most marginalised. We work through a partnership model, as we believe that this is the most sustainable, effective and cost efficient way of achieving sustainable development. It also promotes localisation.

SERVE defines partnership as a shared vision and a commitment to work together to bring real and sustainable benefits to the poor and marginalised. It requires a long term commitment, clearly defined expectations and shared responsibility for achievements. Our largest partner is Young Africa, who we have worked with since 2008. Other important partners include APD and Sumanahalli in India and the Presentation Sisters/Badjao Tribe in the Philippines.

Rooted in a core set of values, including trust, equality, honesty, respect for difference / diversity and solidarity, our partnership approach values the unique contribution and strengths of all partners. It enables partners to take responsibility for their own decisions and to decide on their own priorities, acknowledging unpredictability of context and the need for flexible, tailored responses.

#### Our Partnership Approach is centered on the following principles:

-Partner Centered- Mutual Benefits- Promoting community participation & ownership- Investing in innovative local solutions- Accountability and transparency- Focused on Results and Lesson Learning –

# HOW WE WORK

## WHERE WE WORK; WHO WE WORK WITH.

### LONG TERM DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

Priority programme countries:  
Zimbabwe and Mozambique

Key partners: Young Africa Hub  
(based in Zimbabwe) and  
Young Africa Zimbabwe and  
Young Africa Mozambique

### DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Smaller scale support to partners in Zambia, South Africa, India and the Philippines.

Key partners:

- Young Africa Zambia ; Assumption Parish Mazabuka, Zambia
- Tsholofelo Community, Rustenburg, South Africa
- Association of People with Disability and Sumanahalli, Bangalore India
- Presentation Sisters and the Badjao Community, Cebu City, Philippines

SERVE's programmes are concentrated in **Zimbabwe and Mozambique**. Over the timeframe of this strategy, we envisage expanding our long-term development programme in Zambia.

Our partnerships in South Africa, India and the Philippines remain very important to us and we will continue to support work in these countries.

Our partners are organisations that are legally registered in their country of operation as non-governmental organisations (NGOs), community based organisations (CBOs), faith based organisations (FBOs) and/or trusts.

Our Volunteering Programme contributes essential capacity building support and funding to the development work we do with our partners.

SERVE manages specific grants for the Redemptorist Solidarity Office for Africa/Madagascar in Zimbabwe, South Africa and India.

Increasingly SERVE is partnering with Ireland-based organisations including The Irish Development Education Association (IDEA), Code, Cork Public Participation Network, and Irish schools.

Our donors include Irish Aid, the EU, the Dublin Province of the Redemptorists, Redemptorist International Solidarity, Electric Aid, Edmund Rice Trust Fund, COREAM, Learghas, SHARP, JP McManus Foundation, the Ferguson Trust and Cork County Council



# THE VALUES AT THE HEART OF SERVE'S WORK

## THE VALUES AT THE HEART OF SERVE'S WORK

In the course of developing this new strategy, SERVE reviewed and refreshed its vision, mission and values, ensuring that these fully reflect our aspirations, purpose and the values that drive our actions and behaviours.

### OUR VISION

A world where every young person has opportunity to realise their potential and contribute to positive and sustainable change in their societies. A world where fairness, equality and a belief in shared humanity prevail.

### OUR VALUES

- **Solidarity:** We stand in support of all those we work with, united in our concern on issues of social justice and equality. 'Solidarity in Action' has been our motto for many years and remains unchanged!
- **Commitment**
  - We are committed to working through partnership; to collaborating with our partners in good times and bad, in a spirit of mutual respect and responsibility, shared values and local ownership.
  - We are committed to young people, to allowing their voices to guide our work, and to doing whatever we can to help them thrive.
- **Youth Potential:** We believe in the limitless potential of young people and choose to focus on them as the key to a brighter future for their communities and our world. We value empowerment, collaboration, innovation and creativity in response to their needs.
- **Accountability:** We hold ourselves and one another responsible for ensuring that we deliver impact, and that our work is underpinned by transparency, integrity and learning.
- **Respect:** We value the equal dignity and worth of all people, rooted in our shared humanity. We are grounded, authentic and true to ourselves.

### OUR MISSION

To work in partnership to create opportunity for young people affected by poverty and inequality and to enable young people to become active global citizens, committed to building a better world

# OUR STRATEGIC FOCUS 2024-2028

## OUR STRATEGIC FOCUS 2024-2028

### THE CHANGING CONTEXT AND IMPLICATIONS FOR SERVE'S WORK

SERVE continues to grow, evolve and respond to the changed context in which we work. We have reflected on lessons learned, the implications of the changed context and what we will need to do differently in the period ahead.

**SERVE defines itself as an organisation centered around young people.** Young people are the common thread across our work and the strategic focus that will be maintained and nurtured. Although we are a small organisation, we maximise our impact by **concentrating our efforts and resources** through an effective and efficient **partnership approach**.

We will position ourselves as an organisation that is innovative, focused on seeking solutions to reaching those furthest behind and to empowering young people in a fast-changing world.

For **over 10 years**, SERVE has focused its development programmes on **strengthening the livelihoods and wellbeing of young people living in poverty** – a focus that remains entirely relevant today and for the period ahead. Across the countries where we work, young people want to be independent and financially secure, and want to contribute to their communities and societies. However, they continue to face multiple barriers across different levels. Whilst education and skill building remain critical, including TVET, SERVE will also pay attention to the social and structural issues that are necessary for young people to become economically and emotionally resilient and to realise their potential.

**SERVE's model needs to evolve to remain relevant and future-focused.** We will seek out new approaches to develop meaningful connections with young people in Ireland, to engage them around issues of social justice and to build SERVE's constituency. Presently, young people in Ireland are facing unprecedented challenges. Yet, they remain concerned about issues of inequality and social justice and want to make a difference. We will continue to build connections between young people at home and overseas, based on their shared values and aspirations.

**Young people across the world are deeply concerned about the climate crisis and will bear the brunt of its impacts.** We will strengthen climate consideration across our work by building internal skills and capacity, as well as our partners'; assessing the environmental impact of our interventions; integrating climate into future programmes; and exploring the potential of new partners that have climate expertise or focus in their work.

**SERVE will continue to invest in its staffing structures and systems in order to deliver accountability to all our stakeholders.** We will maintain our track-record and reputation for strong governance and sound programme management. We will invest further in strengthening our profile through networking, outreach, communications and targeted advocacy.

# OUR STRATEGIC FOCUS 2024-2028

## OUR APPROACH TO OVERSEAS VOLUNTEERING

SERVE was established as a result of the experience gained by a group of individuals who volunteered overseas, and a desire to make that experience available to others. By 2023, 1,235 people had volunteered overseas with SERVE (including immersion students). SERVE has 20 years of organisational experience in recruiting, training, and placing volunteers.

SERVE has thrived due to the emotional connection and motivation it has been able to create with its network of volunteers. Returned volunteers have gone on to give their time, energy and expertise to SERVE as staff, interns, board members, volunteer team leaders and fundraisers. Volunteers have always been an invaluable resource to the organisation and the spirit and principles of volunteerism are central to SERVE's DNA.

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In recent years, across the international development sector, the viability of conventional overseas volunteering models has become unclear, due to environmental and climate concerns. There is also the opinion, often articulated in the development sector, that overseas volunteering *can* perpetuate power imbalances between countries. Increasingly, overseas volunteering is being framed within an approach of a lifelong journey of active citizenship, with organisations committing to increasing diversity and inclusion, reciprocity, and environmental sustainability in volunteering programmes.

SERVE's work with its volunteers and immersion programmes has always been guided by a global citizenship education approach, with volunteers supported to develop their critical thinking skills and engagement with the international development process before, during, and after their volunteer experience. SERVE has taken leadership on a model of responsible overseas volunteering that focuses on mutual learning and sharing and it is fully compliant with the Comhlámh Code of Good Practice for overseas volunteering.

In response to COVID and changing dynamics in the international development sector, SERVE has piloted new and creative approaches to volunteering, including virtual and domestic volunteering, and developed stronger integration between its Global Citizenship Education and volunteering programmes.

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*Over the course of this new strategy:*

SERVE sees opportunity in further embedding volunteering within our GCE and development programmes, blending domestic and overseas volunteering, promoting greater diversity in volunteering, and exploring the use of technology to build connection between young people in Ireland and overseas. These changes also present challenges that will take time and careful testing to work through.

SERVE will continue to implement volunteering programmes, at home and overseas, within the context of 'a lifelong journey of active citizenship', aligned to Ireland's policy commitment of engaging citizens in challenging poverty, inequality and social injustice. SERVE understands volunteerism to be a positive concept, centred on solidarity and partnership within communities, built on connection and care for one another and building *a better world*.

# OUR STRATEGIC FOCUS 2024-2028

## SERVE THEORY OF CHANGE

### **SERVE's new strategy responds to our assessment of context and addresses the following problem:**

Every young person has the right to grow-up in a just and sustainable world in which they can thrive and realise their potential.

Young people want to be independent, financially-secure and resilient; they want to actively contribute to their communities and societies.

But, across the globe, hundreds of millions of young people are trapped in cycles of poverty and escalating inequality. They lack resources and opportunities, often their voices are not heard and their agency is inhibited. They face multiple and systemic barriers and discrimination across different levels, compounded by the climate crisis, demographic pressures and escalating conflict and insecurity. Those who are vulnerable are at risk of experiencing further and multiple vulnerabilities, falling further behind.

Globally, unemployment among young people is more than three times more common than among adults<sup>2</sup>. Africa is the region with the youngest population and growing. There is an opportunity to reap the benefits of the demographic dividend, *if* young people have the necessary skills demanded in sustainable, growth-enhancing sectors and *if* they are able to find productive employment or access credit and other inputs, facilitated by supportive and responsive policies. There is an urgent need for more and better opportunities for young people – especially those who are most excluded and face most discrimination, namely women, those in rural areas and people with disabilities - to gain the skills and confidence required to access jobs or start their own businesses, so that they can take those vital first steps towards livelihood security, resilience and independence.

Young people in Ireland face unprecedented challenges and many are anxious and fearful about their own futures. Yet, they care about broader issues of inequality, climate and social justice and want to make a difference.

Our challenge is to support sustainable solutions to the barriers that prevent young people from realising their potential and to find innovative ways of building connection between young people in Ireland and in the global South, so that we nurture compassion and foster collective responsibility in building a better world and tackling poverty, injustice and inequality.

### **Therefore, our Goal is:**

To work in partnership, overseas and in Ireland, to support *marginalised* young people to become confident, skilled, resilient and active citizens and to break down barriers that prevent them from thriving

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<sup>2</sup> ILO 2022

# OUR STRATEGIC FOCUS 2024-2028

Our strategy is designed around three areas of impact:

IMPACT	THEORY OF CHANGE
Young people affected by poverty and inequality benefit from accessible and holistic livelihood and development opportunities.	<p><b>IF</b> young people, especially those who are most marginalised and excluded - young women, rural youth and people with disabilities - gain the requisite skills and confidence...</p> <p><b>And</b> there are programmes and incentives in place to help them get a foot on the ladder...</p> <p><b>Then</b> they will be more likely to find productive employment or to access credit and inputs to start their own businesses...</p> <p><b>So that</b> they will benefit from enhanced livelihood security, resilience and independence</p>
Marginalised young people (and organisations that represent them) are active in challenging inequality and injustice and participating in decisions that affect their lives	<p><b>If</b> organisations ensure young people's needs and perspectives are central to their work...</p> <p><b>And</b> they amplify their voices in key processes...</p> <p><b>Then</b> young people will have greater agency and key decisions and processes will better reflect their needs...</p> <p><b>So that</b> discrimination and exclusion of young people will be reduced and young people may/can reach their potential.</p>
Young people in Ireland are better informed and more actively engaged on social justice, human rights and global development issues	<p><b>IF</b> young people in Ireland are informed and supported to engage with social justice issues...</p> <p><b>And</b> can avail of opportunities to get involved and to connect first-hand with these issues...</p> <p><b>Then</b> they will become advocates for change...</p> <p><b>So that</b> collective responsibility is fostered in building a better world, tackling poverty, injustice and inequality.</p>

This is translated in to five outcomes, around which we will plan our work, deliver results and accountability.



# STRATEGIC OUTCOMES

## STRATEGIC OUTCOMES

### OUTCOME 1 MARGINALISED YOUNG PEOPLE OBTAIN NECESSARY SKILLS AND SUPPORTS TO FIND PRODUCTIVE EMPLOYMENT OR ACCESS CREDIT AND INPUTS TO START THEIR OWN BUSINESSES

#### What we aim to deliver (Results)

1. Effective and sustainable TVET programmes delivered, leading to improved economic activity, income and savings level amongst young people
2. Graduates are more resilient and better equipped to manage shocks and respond to setbacks
3. Best practice self-employment initiatives for young people developed and promoted

#### What we will do (key actions);

- Support access to **quality** vocational education training for youth in priority programme countries of Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe;
- Invest in the practical needs of vocational training providers (e.g. equipment, facilities, ICT etc.);
- Invest in curricula development and training accreditation aimed at improving quality and consistency of vocational education and training;
- Enhance private sector linkages, through networking, market analysis and supporting employer-led training programmes;
- Enhance life skills training and 'Wellness Programmes' so that young people can build their emotional resilience;
- Expansion of post graduate support programmes so that YP are supported in their transition from training to employment / business;

- Pilot and test models aimed at supporting self-employment (e.g. micro credit schemes, graduate kits, mentoring).

#### What we will measure? (Key performance indicators)

- 8,500 young people accessing holistic TVET training;
- 70% of these young people are economically active after graduating;
- Evidence of improvements in quality and consistency of VET facilitated through SERVE support (e.g. revised training curricula);
- 8,500 graduates feel confident in themselves, about their future, their core skills and understanding of life skills issues;
- 1,500 young people accessing SERVE supported self-employment initiatives.

# STRATEGIC OUTCOMES

## OUTCOME 2 LIVELIHOOD AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES ARE MORE ACCESSIBLE AND EQUITABLE TO MARGINALISED YOUNG PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY YOUNG WOMEN, RURAL YOUTH AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

### What we aim to deliver (Results)

1. Improved access to holistic accredited vocational training for marginalised youth
2. Vocational training models are more accessible and equitable for underserved/marginalised communities
3. Innovative approaches to TVET are supported, with a view to enhancing accessibility and equity
4. Partners have strengthened ability to target training to young people with disabilities

### What we will do (key actions);

- Support initiatives that improve access to holistic vocational training services for those youth who are most marginalised (e.g. scholarship programmes/ transport & access issues/ on-campus facilities);
- Support and document results from outreach training models that target underserved communities;
- Support partners to be at the forefront of the Digital Transformation in TVET (e.g. digital training infrastructure, training of staff, bridging digital divide for students);
- Strengthen coherence between partner programmes and the 'Greening in TVET' Agenda;
- Partners are supported to incorporate measures to reach young people with disabilities, based on comprehensive needs assessment.

### What we will measure? (Key performance indicators)

- 1,800 marginalised young women and men and people with disability accessing vocational training through SERVE-supported 'access initiatives (1,500 via scholarship, 300 via on campus facilities);
- 800 marginalised young people accessing training through outreach models supported by SERVE;
- 8,500 young people accessing vocational training, life skills training, entrepreneurship training or bespoke training programmes digitally;
- 5 distinct digital / 'Greening' focused interventions supported by SERVE;
- Number of measures reported by partners to incorporate a stronger disability-focus in to their programmes (subject to resources).



# STRATEGIC OUTCOMES

## OUTCOME 3 PARTNER ORGANISATIONS SUPPORTED TO IMPLEMENT LOCALLY APPROPRIATE, INNOVATIVE AND QUALITY PROGRAMMES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND TO AMPLIFY YOUNG PEOPLE'S VOICES IN KEY PROCESSES

### What we aim to deliver (Results)

1. Strong partnerships in place, founded on openness, respect, shared values and effective collaboration
2. SERVE programmes and partnerships promote learning and innovation in the youth development sector
3. Enhanced participation of marginalised young people in key decision making processes

### What we will do (key actions);

- Provide partners with financial support, including support to capacity strengthening, so they can deliver effective, contextualised and innovative programmes for young people;
- Support partner capacity strengthening through long-term volunteer support / skills exchange;
- Explore opportunities to deepen linkages with the TVET sector in Ireland and to promote the exchange of knowledge;
- Alongside our partners, promote the benefits and relevance of TVET through external communications;
- Strengthen the capacity of SERVE, its partners and the young people we work with to advocate on youth issues at local, national and international levels, through networking, training and analysis;
- Work with partners to strengthen programming on youth rights, voice and participation; Reinforce this work through GCE, outreach and external communications at home;

- Listen to the voices of young people to understand their development needs (e.g. scoping studies & consultation exercises);

### Subject to resources:

- Identify and establish at least one new strategic partner in the youth sector in southern Africa;
- Work collaboratively with our partners to strengthen documentation of good practices emerging from our programmes, as well as from the sector more broadly.

### What we will measure? (Key performance indicators)

- 90% of funding secured by SERVE on-granted directly to partners;
- 15 distinct partner capacity building initiatives supported;
- Evidence of SERVE and its partners engaging in advocacy initiatives, with improved participation of young people in development processes;
- 5 programme initiatives supporting young people's engagement on rights issues.

# STRATEGIC OUTCOMES

## OUTCOME 4 YOUNG PEOPLE AT HOME AND OVERSEAS ARE EMPOWERED AND ENABLED TO UNDERSTAND THEIR RIGHTS AND TO CRITICALLY ENGAGE WITH GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

### What we aim to deliver (Results)

1. Innovative GCE programmes developed and delivered
2. SERVE facilitates and fosters youth engagement on issues of social justice and youth development
3. SERVE demonstrates leadership in implementation of responsible and progressive volunteering models

### What we will do (key actions);

- Design and deliver new GCE programmes, rolling out pilot established in 2023;
- Expand knowledge and use of the Global Goals Trail. Expand and replicate concept;
- Build relationships with Cork City and Cork County Councils as part of their Sustainable Development Portfolios;
- Build relationships with strategic partners in Belfast;
- Strengthen internal capacity on youth advocacy, campaigning and GCE;
- Conduct consultation and feedback exercises to ensure we are listening and responding to voices and concerns of young people in Ireland and overseas;
- Create information products to inform young people how and where they can engage on social justice and Youth Development issues;
- Test new interventions that build connection between young people at home and overseas - e.g. online sessions on key themes such as disability action, mental health, drug & alcohol abuse;
- Organisation of overseas volunteer programmes, including engagement of young

people in Ireland and overseas in programme planning;

- Trial new approaches to recruitment in overseas volunteering to encourage diversity and inclusion amongst participants;
- Deliver bi-annual Immersion Programme in 2024 and 2026;
- Strengthen contact and collaboration with returned volunteers.

### What we will measure? (Key performance indicators)

- 5 secondary schools accessing package of GCE, with 125-150 students participating in the six-week GCE/SDG Schools Champion Programme by year 5;
- % of young people who participate in SERVE programmes (volunteer, immersion, GCE and Fundraisers) that have taken practical action;
- Interactive platform developed for young people to access information on Social Justice and Youth Development issues;
- SERVE runs 2-3 overseas volunteering programmes each year;
- 25 returned volunteers participating in SERVE mentorship programme (5 per year) SERVE@home programme relaunched and holding 5 activities per annum.

# STRATEGIC OUTCOMES

## OUTCOME 5 SERVE IS AN EFFECTIVE, ACCOUNTABLE AND YOUTH-FOCUSED ORGANISATION WITH THE SKILLS, CAPABILITIES AND QUALITY PROGRAMMES TO DELIVER ITS STRATEGY

### What we aim to deliver (Results)

1. Effective policies and systems in place, including full compliance with all relevant standards
2. SERVE is fully accountable to all its stakeholders and to delivering results for young people across its programmes
3. An effective team is in place with the skills and capabilities to deliver, with strong oversight
4. A sustainable organisation underpinned by effective fundraising, external engagement and communications

### What we will do (key actions);

- Key administrative, financial and organisational policies and systems embedded and updated as necessary;
- Continue to fully comply with all relevant legislation and sectoral standards;
- Maximise the relationship with Scala, working with them to grow it as a youth friendly campus in Cork;
- Strategy is implemented, monitored and evaluated through annual operational planning, annual reporting, systematic monitoring and external evaluation;
- Annual audits completed and responded to;
- A comprehensive HR Strategy developed with emphasis on recruitment for key roles, upskilling and staff retention;
- Continue to invest in Board skills on governance and compliance and to maximise the effectiveness of board membership, including sub-committees;
- Execution of fundraising strategy under direction of the Board, with a focus on expanding SERVE's income base, raising unrestricted funds and ensuring limited dependence on any one donor;

- Proposals developed for new rounds of Civil Society funding from Irish Aid, EU grants and additional institutional funding on GCE;
- Expand communications and external engagement with a view to enhancing visibility and understanding of SERVE's work;
- Develop digital media campaigns to support advocacy and fundraising activities.

### What we will measure? (Key performance indicators)

- SERVE meets or exceeds standards established by the Charities Regulator;
- All organisational policies reviewed / updated over course of the strategy, or within a month of any legislative changes / requirements;
- External Evaluation completed of strategy or flagship programmes;
- Annual Board Work Plan implemented and reviewed;
- Unrestricted Reserves maintained;
- Grow unrestricted income by 5-10% each year ;
- Key ratios around SERVE: Irish Aid Income met;
- Growth in annual media coverage.

# OUR COMMITMENT TO SOUND GOVERNANCE AND COMPLIANCE

## OUR COMMITMENT TO SOUND GOVERNANCE AND COMPLIANCE

SERVE is governed and overseen by its members and board directors. The board comprises a balance of different expertise and disciplines, and is rotated periodically. The primary role of the board is to set out the organisation's strategic aims, ensure that the necessary financial resources are in place for the organisation to meet its objectives and to conduct oversight of management performance. It does this within a framework of prudent and effective controls, financial and operational, which enable risk to be assessed and managed. Board sub-committees are in place with specific responsibility for audit and risk, governance and child safeguarding. The Board establishes and reports against annual objectives and reviews the organisational risk register twice a year. It is responsible for implementation of strategy, effective delivery of activities and accountability for resources.

SERVE proudly maintains a highly efficient operating cost model. In 2022, 99% of annual expenditure was spent on direct charitable activity, with 82% on-granted to partners. Partners are externally audited by registered in-country auditors, with audit reports and management letters examined by SERVE management and Board. SERVE completes financial monitoring reviews of overseas partners. We also work extensively with our primary partners to strengthen their capacity around financial management and internal controls.

Our lean management team will be responsible for implementation of the strategy and annual budgets, including systematic monitoring, evaluation and learning. A feature of this strategy will be to promote more joined up approaches and ways of working across the team that strengthen coherence.

SERVE is a member of Dóchas, Comhlámh, The Irish Development Education Association (IDEA), the Cork Chamber of Commerce, the Charities Institute of Ireland and the Wheel. We adhere to, and actively contribute to the development of, codes and standards within the Irish development and volunteering sector. This includes:

- The Charity Regulator Code of Governance
- IDEA's Code of Practice for Development Education
- Comhlámh Code of Good practice for Volunteer Sending Agencies
- Guidelines for Fundraising from the Public as laid down by the Charity Regulator
- Dóchas Code of Conduct on Images and Messaging

SERVE prides itself in being an ethical platform for our partners to share their stories in their own words. We understand the nuances of sharing narratives of the communities our partners work with. We strive to shift outdated and stereotypical perceptions of the Global South.

SERVE recognises the need to build its external profile amongst a variety of stakeholder groups. To date, we have relied heavily on word-of-mouth tactics for external engagement, proactively building connections with schools through volunteer alumni or other contacts, with sporadic media coverage. During this phase we will seek to enhance visibility by developing meaningful collaboration with external community groups and volunteer alumni, strengthening media relations and increasing use of digital media campaigns to support advocacy and fundraising.