

**International Service
Ireland (ISI)**



**Start with what people know,
build with what people have**

**Strategic Plan
2008 – 2010**

VIH/SIDA

VIH : Virus im
VIRUS : micro
MUNO : definiton
MAINE :

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1. Introduction

International Service Ireland (ISI) is an international development agency that was established in Ireland in 2002. It is a company limited by guarantee and has charitable status. It works hand-in-hand with International Service, with whom it shares a common vision, mission and values.

What we do...

ISI carefully recruits professional and experienced development workers from Ireland and abroad to contribute to the developmental needs of our partners who work for long-term solutions to poverty reduction and sustainable equitable development. We place our development workers with local partners from civil society and local authorities to help strengthen their technical and organisational capacities, facilitate exchange and promote learning. To date, we have recruited 99 professionals for an average period of two years to work with our partners on the ground, 25 of whom were co-financed by APSO previous to 2002.

In Ireland, ISI works to promote the concept of Global Citizenship defined as "Having a sense of your role in the world and being willing to take action to bring about change towards the goal of the eradication of poverty". Through campaigns, educational materials and other initiatives based on information and experiences from the field, we aim to promote understanding and increase awareness of development issues in Ireland and abroad and engage more people actively in promoting social change.

On the basis of the proven track record of International Service and analysis of the critical needs of our partners, three Strategic Priorities have been defined for ISI for the period 2008 to 2010. They are;

- Disability and Development,
- HIV/AIDS, and
- Development Education.

This Strategic Plan

This Strategic Plan sets out ISI's strategic objectives and priority areas, its geographic coverage and principal organisational outcomes for the period 2008 to 2010. It is fruit of a process that reflected on the experience and recognised track record of International Service in contributing to the promotion of disabled people's rights, their inclusion in development processes and sharing best practices to prevent the spread of HIV and AIDS. It involved internal consultation with staff and volunteers of the International Service family, consultation with other like-minded organisations and with a number of development specialists in Ireland.

The process reviewed trends within the global development context and in the Irish development context and analysed the lessons learned from International Service Ireland's recent experiences within the Irish development sector. It examined changing patterns in volunteering at national and international level, of development cooperation, and considering the enormous socio-economic changes during the past decade in Ireland highlighted how these patterns could impact on ISI's capacity to engage more people in its work.

This Strategic Plan commits ISI to improve its support to partners and actively engage more Irish people in our work at home and abroad, ensuring that developments workers, trustees and volunteers become proactive agents of positive social change.

1.1 Global Context

The international aid environment is complex and unpredictable. It is difficult for the NGO Sector to determine with a degree of accuracy what future trends in development aid supporting international efforts are going to be. The proponents of aid harmonisation, as embodied in the Paris Declaration, are at best ignoring the value of Civil society and at worst attempting to marginalise civil society organisation's inclusion within the development processes. The multi- and bilateral official agencies that control the bulk of development aid in some developed countries no longer regard civil society as a major actor in development, treating its contribution as instrumental at best. The drive for aid harmonisation is two fold; the first being a reduction in transaction costs for both the recipient and donor governments, the second of using direct budgetary support as a key financing mechanism with resources being made for the civil sector through the budgetary mechanism. The aid harmonization agenda has proved to be much more about aid efficiency in economic terms rather than aid effectiveness in delivery terms.

The European Union (EU) has introduced a whole new set of instruments for delivering funding to aid programmes. From 2008 onwards there will be no co-funding mechanism for European NGOs. Instead, all funding will be passed through European Community (EC) country offices (delegations) and will have to fit within the overall country strategy plans agreed between the delegation and recipient government. Combined with these efforts there are experimentations with strengthening intermediary civil society organisations with a view to channelling development aid through them that will target civil society development programmes. There are some thematic instruments that may be relevant to ISI which will be explored further at the earlier stage of this strategic plan.

1.2 Irish Development Context

Ireland has a long tradition of solidarity with developing countries, clearly evidenced by its long standing active engagement by many Irish people in development activities through missionary work, volunteer service or involvement with NGOs. The Irish public continues to demonstrate their strong support for these activities by readily and generously giving money for development and especially humanitarian causes. They also have a high level understanding and involvement in political aspects of aid and have a great interest in what NGOs are doing in the international arena.

The Irish government has been exceptional in that it has increased resources available for international development given its commitment to poverty reduction and meeting the UN development aid target of 0.7% of GDP by 2012.

Whilst there is a strong commitment to development cooperation, there is a notable transformation in aid delivery geared at improving effectiveness by bringing about coherence in the way in which aid is disbursed. It is in the context of this changing environment that ISI has to firmly position itself among other development players and sending agencies by harnessing partnerships, offering complementary skills and competences.

1.3 Volunteering and Development

Better access to technology, globalisation and recent events such as the Tsunami and the war in Iraq have all heightened the awareness of international issues in Ireland and abroad. This has been coupled by an increasing prominence of international volunteering as a potential way of engaging with global development and has been recognised in the White Paper on Irish Aid. There continues to be a strong interest among Irish people for volunteering opportunities in developing countries, with a greater demand for short-term involvement, rather than the two-year commitment that has been the norm until recently. This is an emerging trend that requires ISI and other development agencies to rethink volunteering so that they may continue to provide personnel as part of a response to meeting identified needs in the developing world.

According to the *Volunteering for Development* paper, there is emergence of a new type of organisation, which mixes an element of service and co-operation with an explicit immersion/intercultural element. The area of volunteering has expanded to encompass a much broader spectrum of activity; prioritising oftentimes the experiential and educational insights ahead of those conventional concepts of contributing to development at a local level. There are also many opportunities emerging from organisations whose primary purpose is not in the area of sending personnel, but is in the area of development, relief, education, business etc., but who do send personnel overseas as a secondary consequence of their primary purpose.

In tandem with this increasing interest, there has been a significant deepening of the thinking around good practice in international volunteering. The importance of establishing standards to ensure that volunteering fits in with, and contributes to the broader context of global development has been widely recognised.

A significant benchmark for international volunteering in the Irish context is the recent **Code of Practice for Sending Organisations**, which has been developed by Comhlámh. It represents an acknowledgement of the contribution of volunteering to development and the concomitant duty of care to ensure standards of conduct are established, maintained and monitored. ISI is a signatory to this Code and is committed to implementing it so as to improve the support provided to our partners and development workers and subsequently the overall quality of our programmes.



2. Core Guiding Principles

ISI embraces the core guiding principles of its sister office in York. These constitute the foundation for establishing our strategic objectives and priorities, which are naturally influenced by the demands of our partners in the south and needs of the Irish partners.

2.1 Our Vision

A world where poverty and oppression are history.

2.2 Our Mission

To combat poverty and oppression by strengthening the organisations of the poorest groups in our countries of operation and by increasing understanding of development issues in Ireland.

2.3 Our Values

- We value partnerships based on mutual trust, respect and cooperation.
- We promote inclusion of people with disabilities and gender equality in development activities.
- We value diversity and inter-cultural learning.
- We are global citizens with shared responsibility to find sustainable solutions to poverty and inequality.
- We see participation and empowerment of local people as basic principles in all our programmes.
- We believe that true development is not possible without human rights for all.

“I came to Bolivia with ISI because I wanted to share my skills with people here so that they can look at new ways of tapping into potential markets for their local produce”.

Cearbhuil Ni Fhionnghusa, ISI Development worker, COINACAPA cooperative, Northern Bolivia.



3. Where we work

ISI currently works in five countries in three regions of the world; in West Africa we work in **Burkina Faso** and **Mali**, in Latin America we work in **Bolivia** and **Brazil** and we also work in **Palestine**.

We work closely with our International Service colleagues and their field office staff where we have strong relationships on which we can build to ensure that programmes are responsibly and successfully implemented.



With the support of Irish Aid, we initiated in mid-2007 two programmes in Bolivia and Burkina Faso. These aim to strengthen the capacity of grassroots disabled people's organisations and promote the inclusion of people with disabilities in local and national development processes. One programme in Brazil which promotes HIV / STI prevention and sexual and reproductive health and rights in north and northeast Brazil has also received support from Irish Aid. These programmes will last for three years.

Future Interventions

During the period 2008 to 2010, ISI is eager to establish new mechanisms of development intervention such as expert short term placements and internships among others that satisfy the needs of our current partners and equally allow us to broaden our partner base and geographic scope.

4. Strategic Objectives

We have defined **four Strategic Objectives** that will guide our work. They are;

1. **Strengthen the capacities of our local partners** by placing professional and experienced development workers so that they can contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.
2. **Create innovative links and partnerships** between Irish society and our local partners in disability and HIV/AIDS to strengthen their voices at local and national level.
3. **Diversify our funding sources** in order to provide greater programmatic support to IS field offices and achieve a self-sufficient set-up in Ireland.
4. **Increase awareness of development issues** of the Irish public and influence national and international policy in disability and development and HIV/AIDS.

“Eradicating poverty and being in solidarity with those in most need are a way of life, not just a job”.

ISI returned development worker Padraig Byrne



5. Strategic Priorities

ISI will work closely with International Service and its field offices to deliver quality programmes in three strategic areas that represent the nucleus of our work. In the next three years we will focus our resources on;

5.1 Disability and Development

2007 marks a huge step forward in international awareness on disability. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) opened for signing on March this year; till now 117 countries have signed and 7 have ratified, which represents a strong commitment to redressing the inequalities that people with disabilities face across the world today.

This strategic plan focuses on promoting social change that empowers and incorporates the skills and experiences of people with disabilities. 'By working with their representative organisations, we seek to enable and empower people with disabilities to take their rightful place in society, gain access to services and make their voices heard'.

We have successfully mobilized resources from Irish Aid for partners who address disability issues in Bolivia and Burkina Faso. We are an active member of the Disability and Development working group that is supported by Dóchas to bring to the fore in Ireland critical issues on disability and development and how programmatic work can be improved and strengthened. This is and will remain a key strategic priority for ISI.

5.2 Development Education

ISI recognizes the growing importance of alliances with non-state actors and other stakeholders, including NGOs, trade unions and academics responsible for the integration of development education in society at a variety of levels of public engagement.

We see development education as an active learning process founded on the values of solidarity, equality, inclusion and co-operation. 'It enables people to move from basic awareness of development priorities and sustainable human development, through understanding of the causes and effects of global issues, to personal involvement and informed action'.

Our partners and development workers in the field are an invaluable source of information and knowledge on a wide range of issues who will share information and their experiences to raise awareness and improve the impact of our work.

ISI will work with the media and development education actors in Ireland such as IDEA, 80:20 and with the Development Education Unit of Irish Aid to inform and shape public, thereby empowering people to take action in campaigns and lobbying actions.

5.3 HIV and Aids

During this timeframe of this Strategic Plan, a focus on the poorest that are infected and affected by HIV and AIDS will be at the heart of ISI's efforts. Through the placement of development workers with local partner organizations, we will develop the technical, organizational and institutional capacity of our partners working on sexual and reproductive health (SRH), building on existing holistic approaches to address sexual health issues. This will result in increased access to information and support for the most vulnerable groups in society, leading to safer sexual practices, and greater awareness of their rights and responsibilities. Promoting sexual and reproductive rights as well as improving health, also has an impact on reducing vulnerability and exclusion through accurate information, reduced stigma and access to services.

By co-ordinating learning and resources, we will disseminate relevant information, best practice and appropriate methodologies in SRH/HIV awareness throughout our programmes, enabling ISI to support the Millennium Development Goal to respond effectively to the HIV pandemic through programmes of prevention.

6. Delivering the Strategic Plan

As mentioned in our Mission, we aim to combat poverty and oppression by strengthening the organisations of the poorest groups in our countries of operation and by increasing understanding of development issues in Ireland. To attain this, it is essential to have clear-cut organisational outcomes and delivery strategies to ensure that we keep on track during the coming 3 years.

Organisational Outcomes

Outcome No.1	Good Governance of ISI is a reality
Delivery Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define and approve core competencies for the ISI Board. Identify and recruit suitable candidates. Train and constantly support members Board. Develop clear-cut policies for the good governance of ISI and relations with International Service in York. Develop practical working relations and establish clear lines of authority for governance between the two organisations.
Outcome No.2	Management capacity installed
Delivery Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guarantee that competent staff are in place to develop and implement a programmatic approach to our work. Ensure that adequate operational resources are dedicated to achieving recognized and sustainable excellence. Develop protocols and procedures including clear lines of authority for financial and programme management in close conjunction with International Service in York.
Outcome No.3	Human Resources best practice policies in place
Delivery Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Put quality standards into practice such as Comhlamh's Code of Practice for volunteer sending agencies. Provide partners with the most appropriate personal through effective recruitment and placement of development workers. Recruit and support high quality staff for the ISI office in order to achieve strategic objectives.
Outcome No.4	Diverse funding sources secured
Delivery Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a fund-raising strategy for the period 2008-2010 that meets the needs of our partners and suits the Irish context. Diversify our funding base through implementing fund-raising initiatives and campaigns led by a combination of relevant staff and experienced Board members.
Outcome No.5	ISI 'brand' easily recognised in development and public fora
Delivery Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a communications strategy for the period 2008-2010 that allows ISI to inform and engage, thereby building a constituency base. Develop customized awareness tools such as promotional material, a user-friendly accessible website and information and awareness events. Raise the understanding of what International Service does in the field and the support for our work among the public and relevant organisations engaging Irish volunteers.

