



# Revised Strategic Plan

Freedom Peace and  
Justice May 2021-2023



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# 1 Introduction from the Chief Executive Officer



Viatores Christi was first established as a Lay Missionary Association under the Catholic Church in Ireland in 1960. Today, as a global player in humanitarian development, we work with over 30 partners across a wide range of sectors in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. We work closely with our partners to identify and address clearly defined needs, tackling the root causes of poverty within communities. We continue to work with existing partners and build our links with EU and new funders and supporters, and other organisations working in similar spaces.

Following the upheaval of the COVID 19 pandemic this strategic plan was revised in April 2021 after detailed consultation between members of council and VC staff. It builds on the extensive consultation of the 2019 plan. It continues to set an ambitious agenda to grow and ensure our effectiveness, relevance and sustainability in a changed and changing global landscape.

The Irish Government'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 Viatores Christi's own vision:

**A world of freedom, peace and justice, where people in vulnerable communities have greater opportunities to achieve their goals and contribute to society**

Ireland's policy for international development, One World, One Future, sets out goals around reducing hunger, improving resilience, sustainable development, economic growth, governance, human rights and accountability. These are also consistent with our Theory of Change and Results Based Framework. Ireland is also a strong supporter of the Sustainable Development Goals, to which our strategy contributes.

The revised Strategic Plan details what we aim to do and how we plan to change over the coming period. We explain our vision, mission and values together with how these inform our Theory of Change, improving the lives of those we aim to serve. This plan represents an agenda to grow over the remaining period of the plan, improving our offer to partners and primary stakeholders by building on existing programmes and expanding our reach and scale to ensure our relevance and sustainability.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shane Halpin". The script is fluid and cursive.

Shane Halpin

**Chief Executive Officer**

Viatores Christi

## 2 Vision, Mission and Values

### **Our Vision:**

A world of freedom, peace and justice, where people in vulnerable communities have greater opportunities to achieve their goals and contribute to society.

### **Our Values:**

#### **Viatores Christi is Reliable**

We believe in commitment, openness, and accountability.

The people we try to reach are our main priority and they should be able to rely on us.

#### **Viatores Christi is Effective**

At the heart of Viatores Christi is the determination to make a difference. We do this through excellence and professionalism in all we do.

#### **Viatores Christi is Inclusive**

We have a faith-based background and we warmly welcome and work with everyone, regardless of faith, beliefs, gender, sexual orientation, disability, race, nationality or ethnicity.

We believe in a participatory, positive approach.

### **Our Mission:**

We work in solidarity with our partner organisations, to improve the lives of local people, by improving access to basic services.

## 3 Our Approach to Development

### 3.1 Context and targeting

Viatores Christi aims to support people most in need. Our global programme and partnerships have evolved over time and we have long-term commitments to communities where we have a history of making change.

In all countries and areas in which we work, we undergo contextual analysis and needs assessments that inform the nature of our interventions. Our work is focused on communities where people are in greatest need.

We ensure equal access to the services we support. For example, many in our target communities live with disabilities and we tailor our programmes to ensure everyone can participate.

In the first two years of this 2019-2023 strategy we will develop detailed country-specific strategic plans for our focus countries. These strategies will define an approach aligned to our global strategy for each country and will build on existing needs assessments and projects.

### 3.2 Where we work

During the period of this Strategic Plan Viatores Christi will consolidate existing programming in an effort to improve efficiency and the quality of our support to our partners. To do this we will build programming around existing work and reduce any existing fragmentation. Our countries of operation fall in three categories:

1. **Focus/hub countries** where we will actively seek to expand the programme during the period of this strategic plan.
2. **Other countries**, where we are currently engaged but where future interventions will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.
3. **Legacy countries**, where commitments will be honoured within a given time frame but programming is unlikely to continue.

## **Focus Countries**

### **Uganda**

Uganda is ranked at 162 out of 188 countries on the UN Human Development Index with over 21% of the population living in poverty. We partner with a number of organisations to deliver a wide range of development interventions in Uganda including training in financial literacy and improving access to savings and loans for co-op societies; training local staff working with socially disadvantaged children and youth, including teenage mothers living on the streets; training the Inspectorate of Schools in order to improve the quality of education and supporting the provision of health, education and community development programmes. Uganda is also a hub country for Viatores Christi, from which we run and grow programmes in regional countries, including Kenya.

### **Kenya**

Kenya is ranked at 142 out of 188 countries on the UN Human Development Index with over 36% of the population living in poverty. In Kenya, we work with partners to deliver programmes in basic education, primary healthcare, income generation, rural development, urban community development, human rights, advocacy and strengthening of civil society.

## **Other countries**

### **Cambodia**

Cambodia is ranked at 146 out of 188 countries on the UN Human Development Index with over 16% of the population living in poverty. In Cambodia our focus is on sustainable community-based care and support for orphans and vulnerable children. Together with our partners, we support children and their caregivers to access vocational training, education and healthcare with the opportunity to live outside of institutional orphanages.

### **Haiti**

Haiti is ranked at 168 out of 188 countries on the UN Human Development Index with over 58% of the population living in poverty. Our focus in Haiti is to improve access to basic services in Port au Prince and in rural northwest Haiti.

## **Legacy Countries**

Legacy countries include El Salvador where we will meet all existing commitments to our partners and stakeholders.

### **3.3 Theory of Change**

Our Theory of Change reflects Viatores Christi's global programme. Our Theory of Change guides our programme planning, and links directly to our results based framework. The developmental problems that we try to address are arrived at through needs assessments specific to each project in each country in which we work.

The key problem we aim to address is that of poor access to health services and education and livelihood opportunities coupled with our partners' need for greater resources and capacity to deliver relevant services. Our key target groups are vulnerable people living in rural or urban settlements, orphans and vulnerable children, people living with disabilities, internally displaced people and people in post-conflict areas. Our entry points for reaching our target groups are our partners, local government and our volunteers.

The steps that we engage in to bring about change (our activities) include providing supplies, equipment and infrastructure to health facilities and schools; providing vocational training and funding for business start-ups; training teacher trainers; providing outreach health services; improving awareness of rights to services, conducting research-based advocacy and training and supporting our civil society and local government partners.

As a result of our work, measurable outcomes include improved quality of education, better equipped schools and health facilities, greater employment opportunities, improved access to health services, policy change that benefits target groups and finally an increased capacity of our partners and greater access to resources. Our work also contributes to wider benefits, such as improved health and well-being, improved standard of basic service provision, greater household income, an enhanced business environment and a strengthened civil society.

Our measurable outcomes and their wider benefits together contribute to our broader development goal: A world of freedom, peace and justice, where people in vulnerable communities have greater opportunities to achieve their goals and contribute to society. Our Theory of Change is shown schematically below

Viatores Christi's Theory of Change 2019 - 2023

The problem we are trying to solve	Our key audience	Our entry point for reaching our key audience	The steps needed to bring about change	The measurable effect of our work	The wider benefits of our work	The long-term change we see as our goal
Poor access to health services and education and livelihood opportunities	Vulnerable people living in rural, isolated areas Vulnerable people in poor, urban settlements Orphans and vulnerable children	Local civil society partner organisations	Provide supplies, equipment and infrastructure to health facilities and schools Provide vocational training and funding for business start-ups Train teacher trainers	Better quality education Better equipped schools and health facilities Greater (self) employment	Improved health and well-being Improved standard of basic service provision Greater household income Enhanced business environment	A world of freedom, peace and justice, where people in vulnerable communities have greater opportunities to achieve their goals and contribute to society
Partners need greater resources and capacity to deliver relevant services	People living with disabilities Internally displaced people People in post-conflict areas Partners	Local government Volunteers	Provide outreach health services Increase awareness of rights to services Conduct research-based advocacy Train and support civil society and local government partners	Improved access to health services Policy change that benefits target groups Increased capacity of partners and greater access to resources	Enhanced continuous professional development Enhanced social cohesion and empowerment Strengthened civil society	



### **3.4 Outcomes, Outputs and Activities**

Our global Results Based Framework aligns closely with our revised strategic plan 2021-2023 and is our monitoring and evaluation platform for our global programme.

Our broad development goal - A world of freedom, peace and justice, where people in vulnerable communities have greater opportunities to achieve their goals and contribute to society – is aligned to our outcomes, outputs and activities, summarised below. Targets for our outputs and outcomes indicators are fully detailed in our Results Based Framework.

#### **Outcome 1: Increased employment and self-employment opportunities**

Measured by: Programme graduates that gain employment

Programme graduates that start new businesses

Programme graduates increase in income

Outputs: People equipped with market-relevant vocational and technical skills

People equipped with skills and resources to start businesses

Activities: Provide training in vocational and technical skills

Provide training in business and entrepreneurship skills

Provide business start-up tools and/or financial support

#### **Outcome 2: Improved standard of primary education**

Measured by: Children gaining higher standard of primary education

Outputs: Teachers in target schools have improved teaching skills

Schools have a higher standard of equipment and buildings

Activities: Train teachers in pedagogical methodology

Make improvements to school infrastructure

**Outcome 3: Improved standards of basic health services**

Measured by: Target communities with access to good quality basic health care services

Outputs: Improved standard of basic services in vulnerable communities

Activities: Improve health service facilities  
Provide outreach health services

**Outcome 4: Improved capacity and sustainability of partners**

Measured by: Partners improved capacity assessment scores

Increase in partners' income

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

Activities: Train and support partners (including through skilled volunteers)  
Provide funding to partners

**Outcome 5: National or local level policy change improves basic rights for target communities**

Measured by: Changes in law, policy or implementation

Improved awareness of a right or entitlement

Outputs: Campaigns influence policy and decision makers

Activities: Programme specific advocacy campaigns

### **3.5 Monitoring and Evaluation**

Section 3.3 and 3.4 details our Theory of Change and how this links to our Results Based Framework. These models represent our framework for monitoring, evaluation and learning. Project specific logical frameworks will be consistent with the structure and content of these global frameworks.

Our development results are central to monitoring and evaluation. We always collect baseline data prior to the start of a project and we work with partners to identify when and how we will measure progress.

Monitoring and Evaluation is also inherent to the support we provide to partners, both in terms of project implementation and changes intended at the partner level. During the period of implementation of this plan, Viatores Christi will ensure that our work is rigorously assessed and our impact is clearly documented.

### **3.6 Volunteering**

Viatores Christi has long enjoyed a strong reputation for volunteering. We recruit skilled and experienced volunteers to support our partners with needs that they have identified. Placements are planned in close consultation with our partners, who assess the suitability of volunteers and conduct interviews and assessments.

We promote best practice in volunteering by complying with the *Comhlámh* Code of Good Practice for Sending Organisations and the Volunteer Charter for Volunteers.

Our own tailored training programme 'Venture' prepares development workers for an overseas assignment. Delivered over four weekends, alongside online modules, the programme covers topics including commitment and conflict, health, global awareness, community development, leadership, cultural adaptation, research methods, project cycle management and monitoring and evaluation.

Upon their return, volunteers play a significant role in Viatores Christi, engaging with their communities and encouraging others to come forward as volunteers.

VC will remain needs-driven as an overarching principal, ensuring that the request for an engagement of an external trained expert only happens if the expertise cannot be afforded locally. Given the changed landscape due to COVID there has been a focus on hiring in-field personnel in the role of Volunteer Development Worker (VDW). This will involve the development of in-field panels and greater support from the regional office. Current VDWs (2021) who replaced the VC volunteers due to travel restrictions are local staff but are being mentored and supported by VC Projects team. International expat volunteer recruitment continues to change and will more than likely be replaced/complemented by shorter term specialised mentorship engagements.

- **Local needs to remain the key driver in determining the volunteer approach**
  - Each project is likely to have unique needs – fulfilling a temporary critical skills gap; a capacity building need – transmission of skills; coaching support; mentoring – either with local or international volunteers
  - Remain in tune with these needs and what works for each project
  - Develop a set of criteria in support of this, including: needs; value for money; duration (time); methodology/mode of volunteering; culture factors
- **A more diverse volunteer model will be needed**
  - to accommodate the variety of local needs – volunteering model generally is in transition:
  - Traditional long-term in-project placement (always a need for these, particularly for those skills that require on-the ground presence e.g. healthcare)
  - Shorter-term in-project placement (e.g. critical skills gap, or short-term capacity building engagement)
  - Remote support, either full-time or part-time in stronger projects that are more established and have good ICT resources/infrastructure
  - Coaching or mentoring support, either in-project or remotely
  - Blend of some or all of the above
  - Remain true to VC's traditional commitment to *sharing life's journey with the poor and the marginalised*
- **Develop Financial model to support volunteer model**
  - Costing model to be development for the diversity of volunteer opportunities
  - Value for money assessment/indicators
  - Consider remote working implications and VC obligations, including cost benefit analysis of supporting volunteers living and working from EU
- **Capture the learning of the experience to date**
  - Develop a review framework which captures key learnings and lessons to usefully inform future approaches
  - Research current trends amongst other volunteer sending organisations

### 3.7 Training and the Global Shift

Since COVID the traditional training at VC has undergone a major shift primarily as a result of transitioning to an online global platform. The Venture training programme which was trialled online in 2020 for the first time was oversubscribed not by our Irish base but by international participants. This demand for affordable development and humanitarian training within the Global South gave birth to our new *Upskills Training Programme* which was created to broaden the reach of our training to include this important and sizeable market. This training, offers greater accessibility and inclusivity – opportunity for local volunteers to participate in training – greater diversity. The recorded content is due to launch in August 2021.

A key part of the revised strategy is to monetise the Upskills training as a way to sustain the programme and if successful to provide a very necessary income generation stream for VC into the future.

Venture will continue in its live online format at least for the second term of 2021 and thereafter reviewed. It is envisaged that the online format will attract even greater numbers as a leading training for the preparation of volunteers in the field globally. As recent members of IDEA Ireland VC will also ensure compliance with best practice in the area of development education.

The option to offer a blended approach to Venture will continue to be explored but would be subject to need/demand and affordability.

Our training offering

	Venture (practical volunteer training)	Upskills (best practice)
Current Target Audiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prospective volunteers</li> <li>• Discerning volunteers</li> <li>• Development students ('global citizenship umbrella')</li> <li>• Local volunteers and staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Locally based development / project staff and volunteers of other faith based agencies, NGOs and non-profits</li> </ul>
Potential additional Target Audiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Third-level volunteer programme participants e.g. UCD</li> <li>• Medical Schools</li> <li>• EU Volunteers ('follow-on' training from VC for placement in VC project)</li> <li>• Missionary organisations with volunteer placement opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Train-the-trainer opportunities may be possible e.g. locally trained staff could in turn train partners</li> </ul>
Opportunities to monetise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be monetised to generate income for VC</li> <li>• Opportunity to partner with institutions/agencies who are training or sending development workers – our practical training as a complement to the academic study</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be monetised to generate income for VC</li> <li>• Variable pricing model to be developed to ensure affordability incl. revenue share model based on social enterprise norms; but also to determine an appropriate pricing point for income generation</li> </ul>
Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Historically the majority of volunteers have been Irish, though this is changing with the advent of localisation. Online training opens up the possibilities of recruiting international volunteers also</li> <li>• Link up the volunteer and training models – ensure training material relates to the real-life needs and experience in the projects</li> <li>• Expanding the pool of trainers so that back-ups are in reserve; opportunity to leverage returned volunteers?</li> <li>• Determine appropriate modes of training – classroom vs. virtual</li> <li>• Re-investment of training income to build capacity in training space; fund a training resource</li> </ul>	

### **3.8 Gender Equality**

Sustainable Development Goal 5 aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Gender discrimination continues to be a challenge in many of the communities in which we work, from girls disproportionately missing out on schooling to domestic violence.

Viatore Christy is realistic but ambitious about the challenges we face and the extent to which we can be change-makers. During the programme cycle we ensure both women and men are consulted and their views heard. We also ensure that services we are involved in supporting represent opportunities for both women and men equally.

Our outputs, outcomes and indicators detail expected changes for both women and men and we ensure that data is disaggregated so we are able to effectively monitor the impact of our work.

### **3.9 Disability Inclusion**

As a result of some excellent high profile conferences and training engagements during its participation in the EU VIVID-T project VC has been positioned well within the sector as a champion of accessibility and disability inclusive development. The organisation, as a result, has begun the journey to become more accessible in terms of its interaction and at the time of writing is seeking to introduce an accessible Global Citizenship Module as part of its Venture Training programme, content of which will include awareness around disability inclusive development.

## **4 Our Approach to Partnership**

Viatore Christy currently works with a number of key partners. During the period of this strategic plan we will expand our partnerships to respond to our global and country specific strategies. We will do this by developing existing partners and exploring potential new partners that align with our strategy.

As part of our due diligence, we conduct detailed capacity assessments of potential partners, focusing on their values and ethos, their aims and priorities and their current strengths and weaknesses. Subsequently we measure changes in our partners' capacity as a result of working with us.

Partnership is a mutual, long-term commitment to achieve common objectives and is based on a common set of values, equality within the relationship, a shared vision of success and a mutual commitment to working and learning together. We value the unique contribution and strengths of all partners and conduct our partnerships in an open, accountable and transparent manner.

The move towards *Localisation* i.e. to strengthen local infield actors to lead development efforts has been fast tracked with COVID. The inability to send international volunteers has led to the appointment of VC Reps, local staff or counterpart personnel who were familiar with the project but up until COVID have been working in a support capacity with the international volunteer. This move has also increased the level of capacity building being undertaken with partners giving additional support, fostering mutual learning and has helped to strengthen how we run successful projects.

#### **4.1 Sustainability and Exit Strategy**

Our approach to sustainability is guided by our needs assessments and evaluation of our outcomes and goal, particularly linked to the support we provide to our partners. We work closely with our partners and target communities to determine how long our support is needed and what will guide decisions about withdrawal of support. Viatores Christi is Reliable, and we will always fulfil our commitments to our partners and primary stakeholders.

## **5 Organisational Sustainability**

### **5.1 Governance**

VC is governed by its members, which elect a Board of Directors to manage the organisation on their behalf. The Board includes the President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary and up to six additional members. Members of the Board are appointed in a voluntary capacity and serve as Directors of the Company. The board meets regularly and is responsible for policy and all governance matters including security, risk management, strategy and financial oversight. The Board delegates responsibility to the full time Chief Executive Officer for the day-to-day management of the organisation. Viatores Christi is incorporated under the Companies Acts 2014 and is a registered charity. Our governance structure is detailed in our Memorandum and Articles of Association.

Ensure Governance evolves in line with changes

#### **Policy considerations:**

- Review of policies, procedures and governance to ensure we are both fulfilling our mandate, and not exceeding it.
- Development of new policies/procedures as needed/ consideration towards the Core Humanitarian Standards as proposed by EUAVI (European Union Aid Volunteering Initiative) VIVID project. (CHS compliance for VC)

**Resourcing:** needs assessment - key supports required for the duration of the remainder of the plan (and beyond)

- Training Resource: to develop and run the Venture and Upskills offerings. Could be self-funded through donor income



- Peer support: from VC Reps in-country
- ICT supports in increase capacity for online work and volunteering
- Options to leverage those returned volunteers/members who have skills that could be harnessed for organisational development

**Council development:** continuing to enhance effectiveness through

- Council evaluation (Governance Code requirement) and succession planning
- In-service training on key governance elements e.g. financial oversight

### **Risks**

Broad areas of risk include

- Management of complicated cash flow and managing risk associated with larger infield spend by partners
- Inability to send volunteers and therefore access certain funding
- Maintaining and affording staff level and skills required
- Managing the changing/future work environment
- Declining /aging membership/people to assist the organisation
- Declining revenues from traditional sources
- Oversight of projects /funds with infield volunteers

## **5.2 Financial management**

Viatore Christi maintains high levels of control over all financial aspects of the organisation including the budgeting processes, annual accounts and grant management. The Board of Directors has appointed a Finance and Audit committee responsible for the organisation's finances. This Committee assists the Council of Viatore Christi in setting the annual budget, verifying that expenditures are appropriate and reasonable and that funds are spent according to approved procedures. The committee also engages an external auditor to audit Viatore Christi's accounts, sets the remuneration of staff and approves any major budgetary amendments. Viatore Christi's approach to financial management is further detailed in our Value for Money policy, which sets out how we aim to maximize the impact of donor funding on our target communities.

Priorities for remainder of plan

**Finance Strategy:** develop a finance strategy which supports our growth and ensure sustainability

- Building on good work of Finance team and committee to date
- Optimise the reporting management information from new accounting software (Surf)
- Determine appropriate policies/procedures and levels of oversight
- Progress donor funding and income generation strategy – growth and diversification

### **5.3 Fundraising**

Our income in 2018 was approximately €500,000, predominantly from Miseen Cara. Fundraising for Viatores Christi is about expanding our impact and the work we do with our partners. We are committed to diversifying our funding and funders and have set ambitious fundraising targets to expand our programme during the course of this strategic plan. Our growth agenda will be centred on our focus/hub countries, expanding upon our effective work and strong reputation, building small projects into larger programmes and supporting the growth of our regional office in Kampala. We forecasted our global income to remain the same in 2019, increasing to €650,000 in 2020, then targeting €900,000 in 2021, €1.5m in 2022 and €2.5 in 2023. At the end of 2020 we had revenues of €822,373 which exceeded our target.

Since the pandemic the growth of fundraised income has been challenged particularly in the traditional areas of VC's base, Church and parishes. The engagement of 2 EU projects has helped fill these gaps and supporting the existing salaries with much needed incomes. Employment Wage Subsidy Scheme (EWSS) scheme implemented in January is a huge support but we are teetering on the edge of eligibility.

There are now opportunities to seek new funders to support development projects in the field. We have made some initial relationships with other funders through Miseen Cara projects and further development in this area will be explored.

#### **EU Programme**

EU has enabled VC to move to the next level in terms of its positioning in the global development sector and provided a first inroad into the EU funding arena. It has provided a creative and innovative injection of energy into the organisation through the additional HR resources and the cross fertilisation of ideas. It has assisted the organisation build its capacity in areas such as finance, marketing, and compliance particularly around disability and accessibility areas. Scope exists for deployment of volunteers from EU to our regional hub in Uganda as well as partnerships with other existing certified hosting organisations around the world. Scope also exists to build strategic partnerships within the EU in areas such as ERASMUS+ to assist with the covering of core costs in VC.

ESC – European Solidarity Corps – humanitarian stream is set to launch in mid-2021 and will provide an option for VC to send experienced mentors for short to longer term placements in the global south. It is an exciting area as it fits into the current VC model of building capacity.

#### **Funding strategy for remainder of plan:**

- Mix of restricted/unrestricted funding to give 'head room' for developing VC's capacity
- Funder diversification
- Re-engagement with donor base (parishes, churches etc.)
- Assess how VC can access funding in new ways – perhaps as a fiduciary partner for other faith-based organisations

- Re-allocation of funders to projects and vice versa to create better capacity and headroom to develop

## **5.4 Marketing and Communication**

Viatores Christi aim is to focus strongly on Marketing and Communications during the coming strategic plan period. Our operational objectives to improve our profile and increase our global income will be supported by an effective Marketing and Communications strategy, developed during the first year of our new strategy. In particular we will focus on improving our branding, developing our website and social media presence, updating public areas of our office space and organising an open day to attract interest in Viatores Christi and welcome new potential volunteers.

### **Strategy aligned to key VC objectives:**

- Position VC as a global player in the Sustainable Development and Volunteering arena
- Expand VC presence in training market
- Expand VC presence in EU consortia/programmes
- Build on the current volunteering programmes (traditional/international/MC model) and expand on emerging programmes (ESC, online, in-field)
- Achieve a coherent message across platforms – internal and external (refer to integrated marketing & communications strategy)

### **Marketing Objectives:**

- Develop and launch Venture online training – Sept 2021 – 25-30 attendees
- Launch Upskills Training -Aug/ Sept 2021 (this was developed with EU funding)
- Develop Open Forum to have 500 members by 30 June (note eBooks have had 3,000 downloads for a small spend of €100!)

### **Priorities for remainder of plan**

- Revised integrated marketing & communications strategy:
  - External: positioning VC in a way that attracts funding.
  - Internal: strengthen engagement with existing volunteers & members; cultivate and appeal to new membership & volunteers.
  - Try to incorporate our story and leverage our heritage, knowledge and experience.
  - Try to communicate the benefits of membership & volunteering.
  - Clear operational plan of action.

## **5.5 Membership**

Membership was discussed at the review session but because of the limitations on time a detailed plan was not possible. A separate session where both council, staff and members are invited will be held before the end of this current plan. Some of the key issues for discussion include;

Membership: considerations for enlargement and diversification

- Online opportunity opens VC up to global participants – potential to encourage new memberships; appetite for follow-on engagement
- Potential to offer organisational membership of VC as well as individual – to be evaluated
- Need to better articulate the benefits of membership (and the benefits of volunteering)

Engagement: of members and volunteers

- Firm up the connections within our growing internal network
- In person events & online mechanisms including separate Facebook forum for membership
- Leverage VC new Open Forum – gives a graduation of contact into VC
- Segmentation of membership based on interests/experience
- Lessons learned from the membership survey
- Need to manage this key relationship - Does it require resourcing over and above the membership committee/team?

## **6 Operations**

Our revised 2021-2023 Strategic Plan is about the changes we want to see in the lives of people we are working with. This strategy represents an ambitious growth agenda, which, together with our partners will challenge each of us within the organisation.

Our Theory of Change and related development objectives detailed above are underpinned by our operational objectives. Targets and milestones are also included in our Results Based Framework alongside our development objectives. These targets are ambitious, and will change as we review progress and re-evaluate. Some of our objectives are only recently emerging and need further work to make them possible.

Our broader operational goal is that Viatores Christi is a high profile, relevant, sustainable organisation, focused on improving the services we offer to our primary stakeholders.

Our goal to grow during the remaining period of this strategic plan from 2021-2023 can only be achieved alongside internal strengthening of our organisation across areas including technical skills, financial and project management and governance. As we grow, we will assess our staffing profile, ensuring that we have appropriately qualified staff. We will link our personal development planning 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.

The revision of the strategy in 2021 has emphasised the flexibility and adaptability of VC staff in the most challenging of working conditions during the COVID pandemic, highlights good leadership as well as the resilience and loyalty of staff and volunteers.

### **Operations: Develop an approach to operationalising the learning as we go**

- Lessons learned activities; incorporate key learnings and survey feedback in how we operate:
- In-country volunteering model
- Partner experience of increased support/capacity building
- Training uptake and participant experience
- Changes in internal ways of working arising from the pandemic – impact of changing approaches to flexible and remote working

#### **6.1 Remote and Flexible working**

The introduction of remote working has proved to be very successful allowing for good interaction on a one to one and group basis while also adding to the globalisation of VC and greater inclusivity of those working outside of Ireland. Staff have seen the benefits of reduced commuting time and cost savings from monthly travel, while management has availed of opportunities to source skills outside of Dublin base. Strategic planning and organisational wide events like the Annual AGM proved to work well on the online format. This area will definitely form a greater part of VC operations for the remainder of the plan.

Our operational objectives in support of our development programme together with key performance indicators are updated below.

#### **6.2 Operational Objectives**

### **Operational Objective 1:**

VC's partners are provided with improved levels of support

This operational objective will be measured by: the numbers of volunteers provided to partners, partners' assessment of VC's support, new partnerships established and the development of country specific strategic plans. Specifically this will include;

- Developing an enlarged training offering – Venture & Upskills
- Evolving the Volunteering model while remaining in tune with local needs; develop criteria based on project needs; remain true to our traditional commitment of sharing life's journey with the poor and marginalised
- Realignment of funding model and development of new partnerships

## **Operational Objective 2:**

### **Improved organisational profile**

This objective will be measured by: returned volunteers and staff engaging with the public, media articles about VC's work (e.g. success stories) and the development of a marketing and communications strategy. Specifically this will involve;

- Internal engagement strategy – Council, Team, Members, Volunteers – both existing and potential
- Public engagement approach
  - General public
  - Other NGOs
  - Potential 'clients'
- Funder engagement approach (marketing strategy)

## **Operational Objective 3**

### **Increased global income**

This objective will be measured by the increase in restricted and unrestricted donor funding and increase in donor diversity. Specifically this will include;

- New EU funding strands
- New donors
- Maximise Misesan Cara funding
- Plan to re-start promotions (parish/churches)
- Optimise mix of restricted/unrestricted
- Income generation & pricing strategy

## **Operational Objective 4**

### **Organisational Strengthening**

- Operationalising learning to date
- Strengthening of governance and systems incl. finance, council evaluation
- Resourcing needs assessment (people, finance & systems)
- Membership engagement & development