

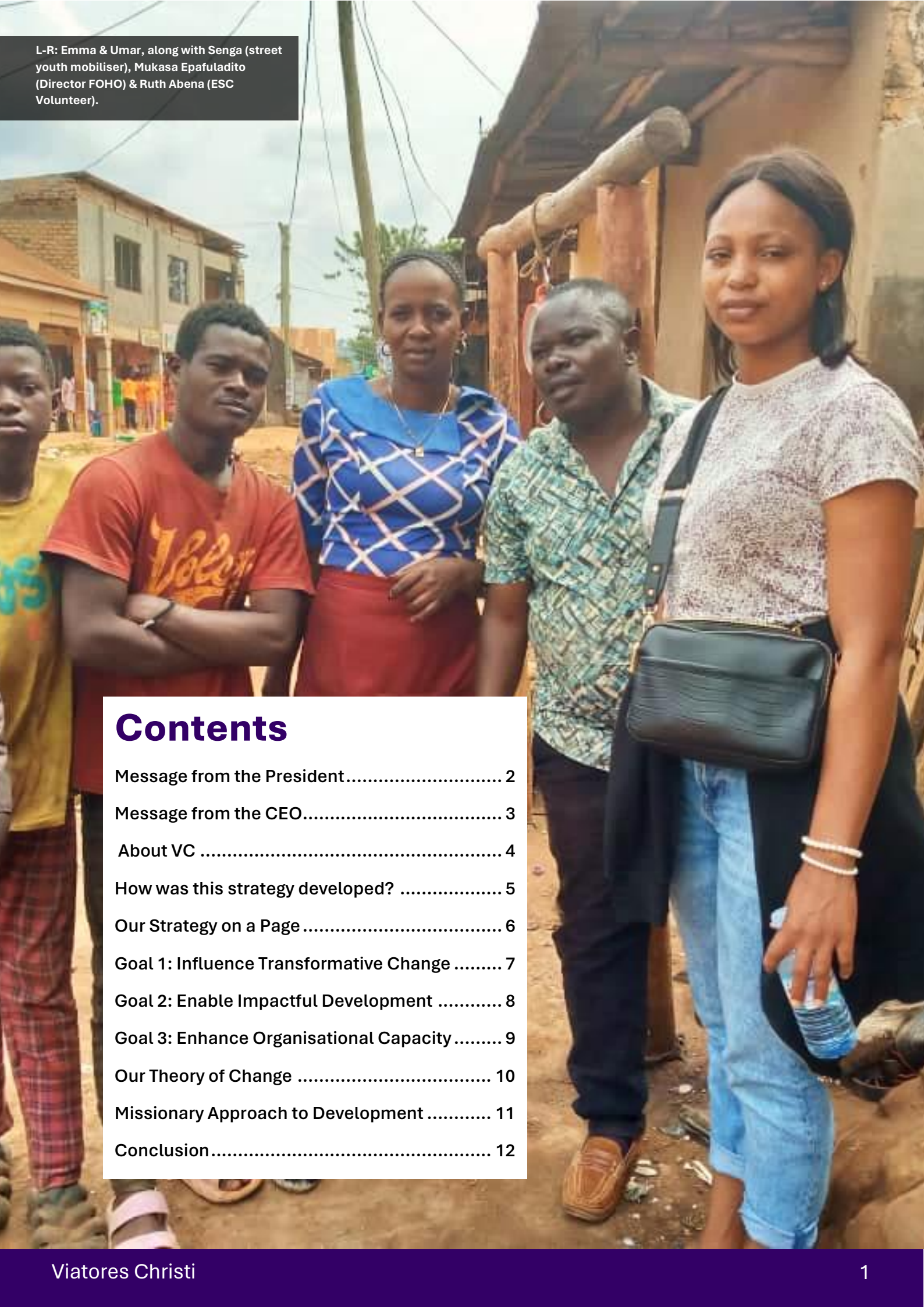
VIATORES CHRISTI

Our Strategy 2024-2027

*‘Building resilient
communities through
global solidarity’*

———— VC ————

L-R: Emma & Umar, along with Senga (street youth mobiliser), Mukasa Epapuladito (Director FOHO) & Ruth Abena (ESC Volunteer).



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VC members and staff during the strategy development workshops

Message from the President



This 2024- 2027 Viatores Christi (VC) strategy positions our dynamic organisation to face the future with confidence and remain relevant by adapting to the rapidly changing international context and continuing to respond to the acute needs of the communities with whom we work.

VC forms part of the long and distinguished tradition of Irish missionaries working with vulnerable and marginalised communities overseas. We are a member-based lay missionary and international development organisation, founded in 1960. We work with partners – including missionary congregations, dioceses, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and community-based organisations (CBOs) – to bring about sustainable, positive change. VC is committed to inclusion, compassion and justice.

We offer a range of interventions to enable change, including training in development, funding for capacity building and the deployment of trained volunteers. VC has worked in many parts of the world, including South East Asia, Central and South America, the Caribbean, Europe and Africa. In 2022, approximately 171,000 people were supported to access quality basic education and health care; opportunities for a sustainable livelihood; and to realise their human rights, including disability rights. Since 1960, over 2,000 volunteers have served overseas. VC is extremely grateful for the generous support provided by Irish Aid through Mísean Cara, by the European Commission and by parishes and private donations.

Our Goals for the next three years are to influence transformative change; enable impactful development; and enhance our organisational capacity. New initiatives will include mainstreaming environmental awareness throughout our work; embracing localisation – where local people take responsibility for their own future; revitalising and reenergising our membership; and developing an ambitious and robust financial sustainability strategy.

This strategy was developed through a participatory, consultative, listening process – involving VC members, staff, partners and stakeholders – which has helped to strengthen relationships and form a shared conviction and ambition about the way forwards. We plan to build on these achievements during implementation.

Pauline Conway, President

Mrs. Nsereko: Supported by Kadcos Nsambya, one of the coops under Archdiocese of Kampala Uganda

Mrs. Nsereko is a widow and has built a number of accommodation units/rentals as a result of loans from Kadcos Nsambya, enabling her to raise money to support her family and educate her children.



Message from the CEO



Strategy renewal has at its heart the job of bringing together all the disparate voices into one coherent voice. When it is done well, it takes account of experiences, reflection, context, viewpoints, aspirations, sentiments and practicalities. It examines where we are now in this point in our history, our *raison d'être*, where we want to be and how we are going to get there.

Being able to do this is itself an act of faith, a trusting that really listening to each other we can understand the messages conveyed behind the voices.

Important to this strategy process, was our ability to listen to all the voices, not just those from the organisation, like staff and members, but beyond this to the voices of our partners and stakeholders in Africa, South-East Asia, the Caribbean, Central and South America.

By listening to others, we aim to build connections, promote understanding and work towards a more equitable and just world.

Pope Francis urges us to look at the 'signs of the times' and warns against succumbing to the comfort of conformity. So in many respects this new strategy is just that, a recognition of the sign of the times. It embraces our Catholic roots. It reinforces the commitment of *Laudato Si* and to the environment. It underlines the importance of mutual respect, dialogue and empathy in the process of education and social transformation. It also builds on our work on human rights, particularly in the area of disability and inclusion rights.

This strategy is pragmatic, including around volunteering as a core aspect of our work. It recognises that well prepared and well-trained lay missionaries or lay volunteers can be significant agents for change in societies, whether in Ireland or in the Global South. Be they for shorter specific tasks or more long-term accompaniment and solidarity, volunteers have a place as an element in bringing about change. It is also pragmatic in that it recognises that the global context is changing. Local led development has to be encouraged and supported in all our activities.

The strategy also affirms the Christian calling to mission and active global citizenship, educating and informing wider audiences of the realities facing global communities.

Confident that we are armed with a unified vision and mission for the future, this new inclusive and thoughtful strategy is our guide for the ongoing work with marginalised communities.

Shane Halpin, CEO

About VC

WHO

Viatores Christi (VC) is a member-based Irish lay missionary and international development organisation founded in 1960. Since then over 2,000 volunteers have served overseas and members of the organisation continue to work there and at home supporting our projects.

We work with partners including missionary congregations, dioceses, NGOs and community based organisations (CBOs) to bring about positive change. We offer a range of interventions to enable this, including training in development, funding for capacity building, and deployment of trained volunteers.



APPROACH

We believe in a local-led development approach supporting communities to identify their needs and find their own tailored solutions. We aim for an impact that is sustainable and will benefit communities over the long-term. Our approach is consistent with the missionary approach to development.



FOCUS

Access to basic quality education and healthcare; opportunities for a sustainable livelihood; assisting people to realise their human rights, including disability rights; providing an ecologically secure future.



WHERE

VC has worked in many parts of the world, including South East Asia, Central and South America, the Caribbean, Europe and Africa. Our EU solidarity volunteering programme has included work in India and Bosnia. Currently, our main focus is in East Africa and our regional representatives are based in Uganda and Kenya.



SUPPORT

VC is supported by a number of large donors including Irish Aid, through Mísean Cara, the European Commission as well as through church and parish promotions work and private donations.





VC members during the strategy development workshops

How was this strategy developed?

The process to renew our strategy commenced in late 2023 and it was facilitated by Caplor Horizons. It was orientated around three main steps: 1) where are we now and what have we learnt; 2) where are we going; and 3) how are we going to get there? Exercises to strengthen leadership and teamworking were included throughout.

During step one, we considered the details of our previous strategy; specifically, the most significant learning we had gained from this. At the same time, we reflected on the situation faced, especially in terms of current and emerging internal and external drivers, such as the environmental crisis.

After this we looked ahead and considered what our envisaged future might be by the end of the strategy period. We asked questions such as ‘what does success look like?’.

The final part of the process focused on what we needed to prioritise attention on in order to achieve meaningful progress.

To complement these three steps, other initiatives took place; for instance, a survey with a wide range of stakeholders plus we had external speakers to help lift our horizons.

The facilitators enabled the process to move forward in a participatory way and they included relevant learning throughout.

Stepping back from the practicalities, it is often said that the process of strategic renewal can be as important as the result. This was certainly the case, especially in terms of developing relationships between people and forming a shared conviction about the way forwards.



VC members, staff and partners (joining online) during the strategy development workshops

Our Strategy on a Page

OUR VISION

A world of freedom, peace and justice, where marginalised and vulnerable people have greater opportunities to realise their goals.

OUR MISSION

To work in partnership to improve the human, social and economic rights of those on the margins.

OUR VALUES

True to our Christian roots, we are committed to these key values:

- **Inclusion**
All are welcome in our global interconnected family. Inclusion is reflected within all levels of our association and our work.
- **Compassion**
Support, empathy, love, honesty, and respect are at the centre of all that we do.
- **Justice**
We work to achieve a just world where people can realise their human rights in an ecologically sustainable way.

OUR BELIEFS

- We celebrate our Catholic roots while embracing diversity.
- We believe in the dignity and rights of all people.
- We warmly welcome and work with all regardless of faith, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, race, culture, nationality, or ethnicity.
- We believe in environmental stewardship by taking a holistic approach to the protection of our common home.
- We believe in local-led decision making.

THE HEART OF VC

At the very heart of VC is Christian love – our mission to make the world a better place. ‘Viatores Christi’ means ‘Travellers for Christ.’ We are always seeking to see the unfolding of the Spirit in the work we do and the work that needs doing.

We are a lay association supporting members, staff, volunteers, partners and communities and we prioritise equality of relationships.

VC’s culture is influenced by the philosophy of Paulo Freire. It is filled with the desire to liberate people from discrimination and marginalisation. Freire’s emphasis on listening highlights the importance of mutual respect, dialogue and empathy in the process of education and social transformation.

By listening to others, particularly voices from the marginalised and vulnerable, we aim to build connections, promote understanding and work towards a more equitable and just world.

Listening to the needs expressed and agreeing on a suitable action complements our Theory of Change model.

We strive to be agile and responsive given the challenging and volatile contexts in which we work. Our intention is to be dynamic, open, forward-looking and proactive.



Mr and Mrs Kakanga with other beneficiaries of Kadcos Nsambya. Mr Kakanga has bought a series of business vehicles and runs a supermarket as a result of loans from Kadcos Nsambya in Uganda.

Goal 1: Influence Transformative Change

Be responsive to emerging and fast changing global needs

We will do this by...

- Journeying with marginalised and vulnerable people in communities to realise their goals.
- Advocating for systemic change and supporting progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through our four key programme areas: health, education, livelihoods and human rights including disability rights.
- Establishing and fostering linkages and networks with other likeminded organisations for reciprocal learning and partnerships and promoting international solidarity volunteering.
- Working within the missionary approach to development and contributing to its evolution.
- Engaging with global citizenship education through different platforms.
- Mainstreaming environmental awareness throughout our work.

VC volunteer Pat Mooney
with Mr Vandin San
Director of Partners in
Compassion Cambodia.



Goal 2: Enable Impactful Development

Be responsive to communities and partners with whom we work

We will do this by...

- Proactively researching and identifying target areas and stakeholders to ensure we are effectively meeting our vision and mission.
- Supporting the role of lay missionaries/volunteers as a component of VC's approach.
- Expanding and updating our training in line with global challenges.
- Building the capacity of partners through training, deployment of skilled volunteers, accompaniment, and financial support.
- Embracing localisation – where local people take responsibility for their own future.
- Effectively building capacities of vulnerable communities to address/mitigate the challenges they face.
- Being guided by relevant international policies and frameworks.



Goal 3: Enhance Organisational Capacity

Be responsive to changing organisational needs; become a more effective change agent.

We will do this by...

- Adopting an inclusive and consultative approach to our strategic decision making and governance.
- Revitalising and reenergising our membership.
- Improving communication internally and externally.
- Ensuring governance, accountability and organisational safeguarding is in line with evolving standards.
- Supporting the welfare of staff and members.
- Developing an ambitious and robust financial sustainability strategy.
- Identifying new donors and partnerships.

Our Theory of Change

The problem we are trying to solve

- Chronic inequality and injustice (including climate, political and economic injustice).
- Marginalised and vulnerable people in communities who cannot access health, education and livelihood opportunities or realise their human rights.
- Partners' lack of capacity to achieve their objectives as key agents of change.
- Poor policies and/or lack of policies in important areas.
- Negative attitudes and behaviour e.g. stigma, social exclusion.

We will respond by working with...

- **Marginalised and vulnerable people in communities who cannot access health, education and livelihood opportunities or realise their human rights including:** *people directly impacted by climate change, people living in rural isolated communities, people in informal urban settlements, orphans and vulnerable children, people living with disabilities, displaced people, people in post-conflict areas.*
- **Local partners**
- **Local/national governments**

Our entry point for reaching these people...

- Partner organisations – community based organisations (CBOs) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs)
- Dioceses
- Missionary congregations
- Local duty bearers e.g. local government structures
- Media and technology

Steps needed to bring about change...



Engaging stakeholders (partners, communities, duty bearers etc.) to identify challenges and solutions.



Designing and implementing interventions that effectively address and mitigate the challenges.



Ensuring partners have the resources and capacity to increase their impact on the lives of the people with whom they work.



Advocating for systemic change and supporting progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.



Networking with other organisations and collaborators.

Measurable effect of our work...

- Better access to quality education.
- Improved access to health services.
- More people with a sustainable livelihood.
- Marginalised and vulnerable people are able to realise their human rights.
- Communities are more resilient to the impact of climate change.
- Government policy-changes that benefit target groups.
- Increased capacity of partners to deliver quality services.

Wider benefits of our work...

- Overall reduced marginalisation, with communities enjoying a good standard of education, improved health, better livelihoods and being able to realise their human rights.
- Strengthened civil society in the areas we work.
- Increased awareness within Ireland of the challenges facing the communities with whom we work.
- Enhanced social cohesion and empowerment.
- Increased action on climate justice.

Long term change...

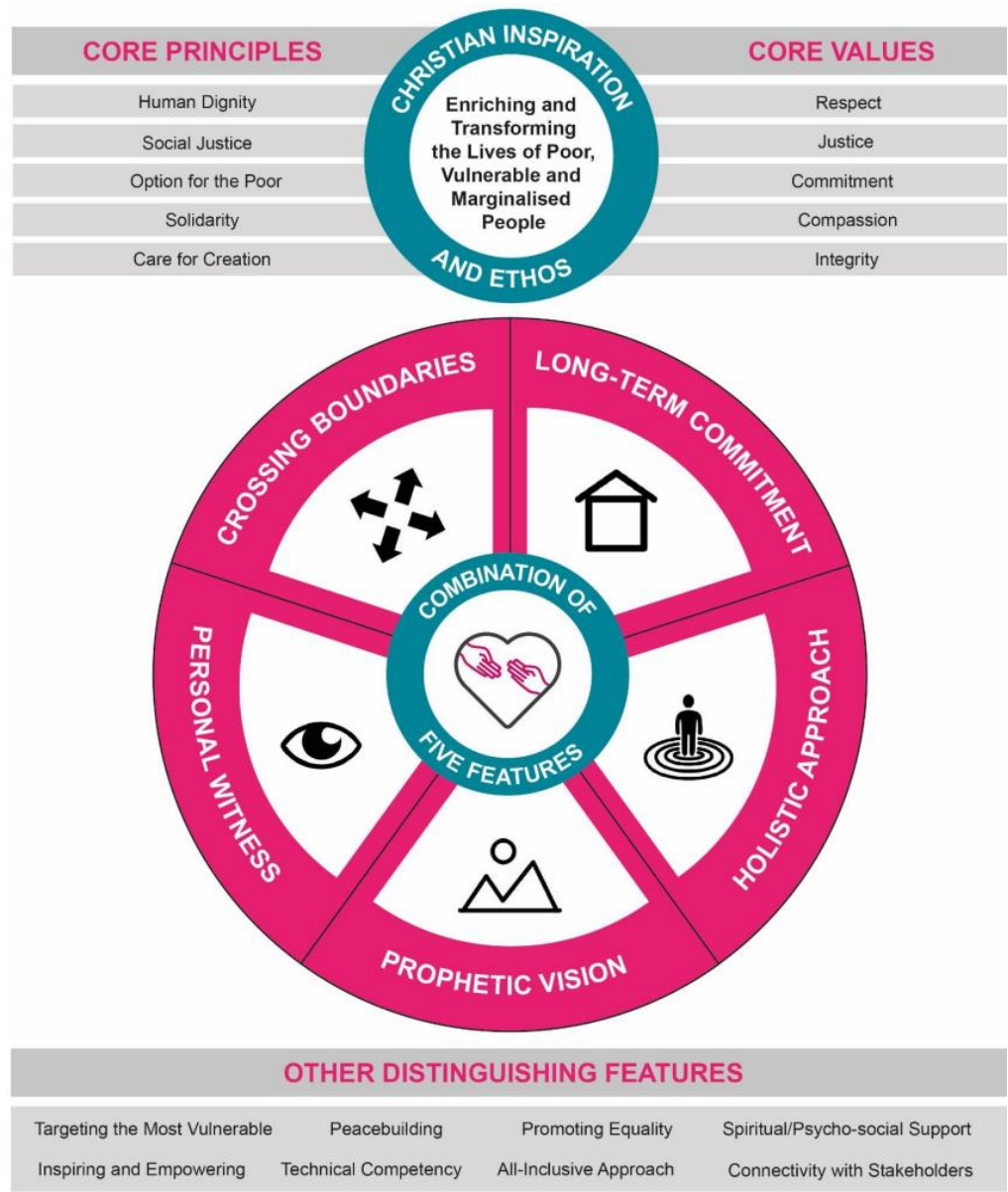
A world of freedom, peace and justice, where marginalised and vulnerable people have greater opportunities to realise their goals.

Mr. Joseph Akugizibwe: Beneficiary of Kadcos Nsambya Uganda. He runs a local food shop that he started with a loan from Kadcos. He is now able to support his family and take his children to school.



Missionary Approach to Development

Our strategy aligns with Misesan Cara’s ‘Missionary Approach to Development (MADI)’ framework, which is summarised in the diagram below. To find out more, visit their website [here](#).





Chiara Cucci (ESC volunteer) & Juliet Nayiga treasurer for Kigamaba teenage mothers' Village Saving & Loans Association (VSLA) at FOHO Uganda.

Conclusion

During the strategy process, we took stock of the organisation's history, stretching back to its establishment in 1960.

It was clear that over the decades, important changes took place to ensure our activities remained relevant in a changing world.

In the same spirit, our new strategy requires us to think and act differently given the acute needs of the world and the communities we work with.

We are fortunate to have the ongoing commitment of so many people that have made our journey possible.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone involved that has helped us reach this point.

We move forward with everyone involved today with a strong sense of conviction and ambition to deliver our strategy. We will do this in a responsive and responsible way, further adapting our course to ensure we use our resources in the most effective way possible.



CODE of Good Practice for
Development Education



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