

Strategic Framework 2005-2010



“Skillshare International Ireland has a vision to continue to develop our programme range in an innovative way that adds value to development work both here in Ireland and overseas”

Fran Flood, Director, Skillshare International Ireland



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The international context for Skillshare International in Ireland

In these early years of the 21st century, we have seen new developments within the political sphere that have changed the course of development policies and strategies that affect global action against poverty. At the forefront has been a shift in the global power structure that has seen the rise of a unilateral approach to tackling concerns. The international focus on security and terrorism has impacted on development, not only by drawing political and media attention away from development concerns, but by influencing aid allocations and the nature of donor cooperation with developing countries.

At a global level the lack of international commitment to the redistribution of wealth, including the failure of developed countries to meet the 0.7% of GDP target and to cancel debt, combined with unfavourable trade regimes, continues to impede the fight against poverty. At the European level, it is important to consider the realities of the new European Union, which is faced with an increased number of poor people within its membership and a lack of NGO involvement in the history of several of the countries. It is also worth considering how this growth will affect the relationship of the European Union and the G8 and the allocation of resources to international development. At a national level we welcome the governments, albeit adjusted, commitment to the 0.7% of GDP by 2012.

Within many developing countries the combination of lack of resources, illiteracy, the HIV and AIDS pandemic and poor infrastructure combines with the uneven distribution of the few resources available to undermine the potential for economic and social development. Where conflict is present, countries or communities all too easily move backwards in their struggle for development.

Skillshare International Ireland, since its inception in 2003, has been working to deliver programmes in Southern Africa (specifically Botswana, Lesotho and Mozambique), in Tanzania and India. This has happened through our skills development programme in these countries as well as short term consultancies and specific projects with our partners.

The environment in which we operate is a complex and changing one. To be effective Skillshare International Ireland has progressively moved towards a more strategic approach to its work. Now, after three years in existence, we have a broader range of programmes, both in Ireland and with our partners and country offices overseas, and a resolute vision to continue to develop our range in an innovative and entrepreneurial way that adds value to development work in Ireland and overseas.

¹In 2004, the group of 8 comprised the governments of the Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, USA, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the EU as observers.

Vision

Skillshare International Ireland's vision is of a world without poverty, injustice, and inequality where people, regardless of cultural, social and political divides, come together for mutual benefit, living in peaceful co-existence.

Purpose

Skillshare International Ireland works to reduce poverty, injustice and inequality and to further economic and social development in partnership with people and communities throughout the world. We do this by sharing and developing skills and ideas, facilitating organisational and social change and building awareness of development issues.

Our values

Self-determination

We value the right of people and communities to determine and develop their own future.

Empowerment

We are committed to collective and individual empowerment.

Partnership

We believe that working in partnership is central to effective economic, social and organisational development.

Skillshare International Ireland will work to

- Respond and adapt to development challenges
- Promote and protect the rights of disadvantaged people
- Support our partners to engage in policy development and debates in line with our shared vision and values
- Run increasingly effective programmes and continually improve in all areas of our work

- We will further work to build the capacity of selected civil society partner organisations in the countries in which we work to improve access of disadvantaged groups to basic rights and health and education services

The following are the expected **key strategic outcomes** of Skillshare International Ireland's programme of work over the next five years:

- Stronger civil society partner organisations (including networks, NGOs, Community Based Organisations, Self Help Groups) in a better position to carry out their development objectives in human rights, health and education sectors
- Improved access to basic rights and health and education services for specific disadvantaged groups (e.g. women, marginalised communities, People Living With HIV and AIDS)
- Improved capacity and knowledge base of civil society organisations, so that they are better able to represent the needs of such disadvantaged groups to influence policy that affects them
- Communities and individuals from disadvantaged groups empowered to claim access to basic rights and services



Samuha Primary Health Care Training Project, India.

Our focus: Geography

In the 2005-2010 period we will:

Set out a strategy and develop policy for geographical prioritisation for the next five years and implement new geographical priorities.

How?

The basis for working in new countries will be transparent, have a clear process and clear criteria based on appropriate poverty, inequality and human rights indices.

We will take into account the variation within countries and the local realities.



Displaying the savings/loans scheme for women's self-help group, Majirkanda village, Uttaranchal, India.

Our focus: Sectors

In the next five years we will work in the three formal sectors of **Health, Education,** and **Economic Empowerment** that were identified by our stakeholders. Specifying them will help us identify, focus on and monitor our activities.

Health

There are strong links between ill-health and poverty throughout the countries in which we work and we have developed a specialist involvement in the health sector.

We will focus on primary and community preventative health care, the health components of HIV and AIDS and responses to medical conditions related to disability (such as occupational therapy). We will promote awareness of global health issues and work with a range of institutions to improve their responses to health issues through both organisational and social change.

Education

Because many different aspects of education need to be addressed, it is important for us to

A key area will be our work with disadvantaged groups to enable them to participate in education and engage with educational institutions.

Economic empowerment

An important focus of our work will be enabling disadvantaged groups to access incomes and a greater share of wealth.

We will also work with organisations which raise awareness of the issues faced by these groups and the consequences of discrimination.



Occupational Therapy training session at the Kilimanjaro Christian College, Moshi, Tanzania.



Basarwa San mother and child in Botswana.

Our focus: Themes

In the next five years four key themes – **Gender, HIV and AIDS, Peace building** and **Human Rights** – will cut across all of our programme activity in Africa and Asia. These themes are not programme areas but added perspectives through which we will view and evaluate the development outcome of our work.

Gender

Gender roles have contributed to the discrimination and oppression of people across the world. We will recognise that this has contributed to the feminisation of poverty and injustices against the girl-child. We believe that in order to combat poverty, inequalities and injustices, all our work needs to take into account that women experience a high level of discrimination and bear the burden of poverty in many parts of the world. To address this we will endeavour to work with a gender perspective in all we do.

This means that we will work in a way that values women, men, girls and boys equally, at the same time recognising their different needs and interests; challenge the unequal distribution of power and resources that leave women and girls bearing the brunt of poverty and work to overcome the injustices caused by socially defined gender roles.

HIV and AIDS

Though a young organisation, we have seen first hand the devastating impact of the HIV pandemic on social, economic and political systems and structures. We have also seen the terrible impact on individuals, families and communities.

At the end of 2004 there were 39.4 million people living with HIV and 4.9 million new HIV infections (640,000 of them children under 15). Therefore we recognise that poverty and multiple disadvantages cannot be effectively addressed outside the HIV and AIDS context. In all of our sectors, we will consider the impact on the infected, the affected and the community at large.



The King and Queen of Lesotho warn of the threat of HIV and AIDS.

Peace building

Skillshare International Ireland recognises that poverty can be a contributing factor to the creation of social tensions leading to conflict. We believe that peace building is essential to ensuring that communities co-exist with one another. We also believe that peace building is about participation and communication as a process of prevention and not necessarily about delivering post conflict solutions.

We are committed to using tools that encourage participation, communication and peaceful co-existence in all areas of our work.

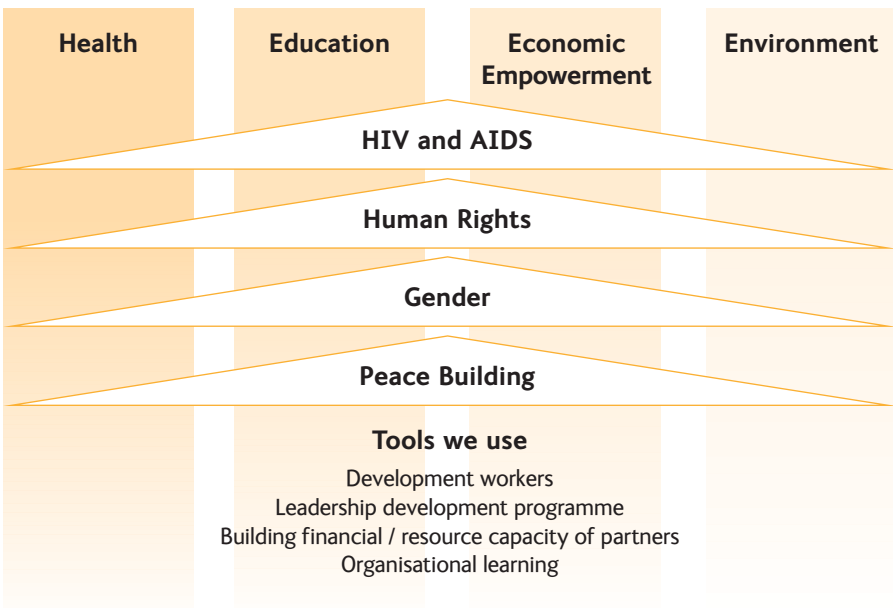
Human rights

Enshrined in our core values is respect for the right of communities, individually and severally, to self-determination. Consequently we are committed to working with partner organisations to empower people to recognise those rights and to speak up for themselves.

In all our sectors we will work towards empowering people to address low self-esteem and to exercise their rights.

The right to development is an unalienable human right by virtue of which every human person and all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social cultural and political development, in which human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realised.

(UN Declaration of Right to Development, Article 1.)



Change agent and advocate

Our approach to development work has focused on developing partnerships with the people and communities of those countries in which we work through sharing skills, facilitating organisational effectiveness and supporting organisational growth.

In the next five years we will look into supporting organisational change, broader social change and learning between organisations.

Organisational change

Our way of working with a partner organisation in assisting them to achieve their vision, invariably involves change within their organisation. This process of organisational change demands a range of inputs in the context of an overall perspective of change.

Social change

In this Strategic Framework we set out our approach in working to facilitate broader based social change, both in supporting partners and in the way Skillshare International Ireland operates.

Our partners

We work with a wide range of partner organisations, from International to local Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and community groups to national government ministries and departments and local government bodies parastatals and movements.



Our tools

We endeavour to help our partners achieve their vision in many ways. Our central activity involves skilled development workers who share their knowledge, tangible skills and valuable experience. We also secure resources and channel funds to help our partners grow and provide their services to a wider community. We plan to deliver a Leadership Development Programme that aims to enhance strategic leadership capacity within the management of our partner organisations. We also facilitate learning and information sharing between organisations which is manifested through building networks and encouraging collaborative activities.

The two-way nature of many of these mechanisms also assists the achievement of objectives in other ways, especially in social change. Development workers may well learn as much as they contribute, which in turn impacts on our development awareness work. Approaches to supporting resource development can also model good practice, demonstrating ways of working that can encourage learning inside and outside the international organisation.

Learning and information sharing through collaborative networks can in some areas lead to an important mobilisation and focus on key policy issues that need to be addressed.

Our specific approaches

In the next 5 years we will:

- Work primarily with and through partner organisations towards locally determined sustainable development
- Implement an holistic way of working which means recognising the need to look at the whole situation and working with our partners with a range of inputs
- Recognise the importance and interdependence of facilitating partners' organisational change as well as broader based social change
- Focus on working with partner organisations at regional, continental and global levels
- Recognise that women experience a high level of discrimination and bear the burden of poverty in many parts of the world

Supporting organisational change and development

We have clear preferences in the way we work which draws upon our values and specific approaches. Our model for supporting the organisational change and development of our partner organisations will primarily involve using **International Volunteering**² through development workers³, **working with partners to build their resource capacity**, building their leadership capability through the **Leadership Development Programme** and using their experiences to inform and promote wider **organisational learning**.

²This term is used as the context in which our development workers and health trainers operate.

³Development worker' includes health trainers and development workers.

These activities focus on – and respond to – the visions of our partner organisations.

<p>In the next 5 years we will:</p>	<p>How?</p>
<p>Develop new flexible models of international volunteering appropriate to today's reality, which are not unnecessarily restrictive.</p>	<p>Our approach will include development workers working across different programme partners in support of a particular theme and being increasingly placed within regional and global thematic programmes.</p> <p>We are likely to see an increase in on-line activities (virtual mentoring) and growth in the use of varied periods of placement.</p>
<p>Work with our partners to build their resource capacity.</p>	<p>Supporting the resource needs of partner organisations.</p> <p>We will strive to access resources from as wide a variety of sources as possible.</p>
<p>Work with our partners to build their strategic leadership capability.</p>	<p>The Leadership Development Programme is a powerful tool in building strategic leadership capability and is in high demand from our partner organisations. We intend to engage in this activity and raise the necessary resources.</p>
<p>Facilitate and promote organisational learning of partners through networking with other organisations.</p>	<p>The establishment of linkages and support for access to networks is an area in which we can add value as an international organisation. This is an area of innovation which we believe needs to be recognised and resourced as an important area of capacity building. We will moreover strive to establish strategic relationships between our partners and like-minded organisations in Ireland.</p>

Supporting social change

In recent times organisational, not social, change has been the main focus of our work.

Through extensive consultation process in Ireland and overseas we have received overwhelming support from our stakeholders to look beyond the objectives of supporting our partner organisations into areas of enabling a broader social change. In order to do so we will focus on four interrelated areas:

- Development awareness
- Our organisational capacity
- Our partners' capacity
- Civil society

In the next 5 years we will:	How?
Engage in building awareness of international development issues in Ireland.	By building an awareness of international development issues and engaging current and returned development workers in this global process. While over the period of this Strategic Framework there will be an expansion of our work in Ireland we will emphasise the connections between our work across different countries and take a global view of development awareness.
Engage with partner organisations to strengthen their capacity in policy intervention.	Within their placements with partner organisations, development workers will work on issues of policy intervention. However, we believe that addressing the issue of poverty must involve building the capacity of partners whose prime purpose is to influence policy. We see this as consistent with and rooted in our priorities in cross-cutting themes and priority sectors.
Strive to engage in Global Health education initiatives in Ireland.	Through being pro-active within national and international networks, fora and institutions concerned with issues that impact on the health of populations at a global level.

Redefine Skillshare International Ireland's role in policy intervention

As an international organisation, we will seek to increase our engagement in policy issues in the field of international development. This will be informed by the experiences of our partners.

Work with a range of structures to promote change and influence policy including civil society, trade union movements, networks, umbrella organisations and policy makers.

In the north and south we will contribute to raising the capacity of communities by encouraging the participation of civil society in decision making processes, promoting local knowledge and building learning opportunities acquired through networking. We will support coalitions from the local to the global level and facilitate engagement with policy makers wherever possible.



Africa Stands Tall. Marching on July 2nd 2005 in Pretoria, South Africa for the Global Call to Action Against Poverty.

Getting better at what we do and how we do it

Improving our effectiveness

We will continue to contribute to improving the effectiveness of the organisation particularly in the areas of:

- Governance
- Organisational culture
- Human resources

Governance

We will develop and support the Board members to ensure appropriate levels of governance.

Organisational culture

Achieving our new five year plan will demand:

- A flexible and responsive approach to the challenges our partners face
- Integrating our work in organisational and social change
- Generating an increased level of funding from new sources and new places

We will create a flexible and enabling environment and develop an organisational culture which encourages innovation and implementation of ideas, alongside a rigorous approach to improving quality and ensuring high standards of delivery to our partners.

Human resources

The basis of our success rests to a significant extent on the people who contribute to our work, whether as staff, development workers, or Board members.

We will ensure adequate human resources are in place in Ireland to support the growing work of the whole organisation.

Finance

To achieve our objectives, we must expand our financial base. While there is one major source of funding through Irish Aid, we intend to build on our existing capabilities to gain access to other sources of strategic and activity funding.

One key internal development will be the introduction of a five year business plan which will enable longer term activity and financial planning, and so provide an improved framework for both generating resources and their efficient and effective utilisation.

We will establish alternative models of funding for key areas of our work including undertaking income generating activities.

Monitoring and Evaluation

We are committed to the effective monitoring of our work which needs to address how well we have put our strategy into practice. The principles that will underpin our approach will be

- Transparency in our monitoring process to enable our beneficiaries and other stakeholders to hold us accountable for our work
- Consistency of the scale of our monitoring and evaluation systems with our organisational size, favouring simplicity over complexity
- The importance, as an organisation, of learning as an organisation from good practice and where we can improve

Skillshare International Ireland Board of Directors (2005)

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Cliff Allum

Joan McGarry

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We will review our Strategic Framework at its mid-point to ensure its continued relevance and address significant changes that we need to make

We will review our Strategic Framework during its final year and evaluate our performance with a view to improving how we operate in the next period of our work

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Pupils at TXY Pre-School, Kang, Botswana.



Ireland