

IF Strategic Plan 2005 – 2007

Mission Statement

- To **respectfully** work with the poor and marginalised, recognising they are best placed to generate and implement their own community development solutions.
- To **positively** respond to community-determined priorities and to strongly support community control over all decision-making.
- To **actively** encourage the promotion of internationally recognised human rights and the importance of a safe and secure environment as pillars of our community development activities.
- To **quietly** advocate for a more realistic and responsible approach to development that is guided by existing research and ongoing evaluation.
- To **ethically** manage our financial resources, and provide accurate and complete information to IF membership.
- To **creatively** develop an organisation that values its staff, and promotes a flexible and fulfilling working environment.

Background

We held a strategic planning day on 12 March 2005. This followed our annual review in August 2004. Below summarises how we view ourselves at this point.

Overall there is a strong sense that IF's identity as an organisation is emerging and this demonstrates both recognition and consolidation of our work. We are pleased with the quality of our projects, and these contribute to a belief that IF's approach to community development appears to be working. The quality, commitment and increasing number of volunteers has been crucial to IF and reflects our professional image and sound management. Finally, although everyone finds it difficult to raise funds, the strategy we set in place almost two years ago has worked, and we are improving our ability to 'sell' IF.

The scale and nature of our projects described variously as 'under the radar', responsive, 'hands-on', catalytic, small, grassroots and flexible tend to distinguish IF from other community development organisations. So does our work towards genuine partnerships with communities, based on personal and direct relationships. This approach includes a sincere attempt to achieve equity in our relationships, evidenced by projects being community driven, not imposed by IF. The focus on relationships extends to the personal nature of supporters: the vast majority of IF supporters are known to IF volunteers.

IF is also special because it is a fully volunteer organisation, and its volunteers have a shared vision of what they what to achieve through IF. There are no organisational politics and IF has been built on the basis of personal relationships and respect. This has led to an environment that allows IF to evolve through reflection, innovation and flexibility.

Two key areas of discussion on our approach to development remain:

- a) Whether 'small is better' (a key tenet of IF's approach so far), and how to define small. At what point do we say to a community this is too big for us? Or this is of a size that is going to change the way we work together?
- b) Should IF support be only catalytic, and thereby limited in time (to say 3-5 years) or should we be aiming for a long-term relationship (bearing in mind our philosophy on this). At what point does the community become dependent on IF? How can we avoid this? Is it possible in the field of social service such as health and education? At what point can we move on to another community that requires support?

The Plan

A. Objective – provide high quality community development support to marginalised communities.

IF provides community development support to poor and marginalised communities: support that increases the ability, opportunity, and security of a community, support that assists individuals and communities to be their own agents of change.

IF believes in the principle that many small brush fires can ignite broad change. Therefore, IF's focus and energy is directed towards establishing, maintaining and improving small scale support to communities, based on our *Guiding Principles*.

- To **respectfully** work with the poor and marginalised, recognising they are best placed to generate and implement their own community development solutions.
- To **positively** respond to community-determined priorities and to strongly support community control over all decision-making.

However a component of improving support, and another way of contributing to broad change is considering and acting on structural and political constraints that keep people poor despite their best efforts to change their own circumstances.

- To **actively** encourage the promotion of internationally recognised human rights and the importance of a safe and secure environment as pillars of our community development activities.
- To **quietly** advocate for a more realistic and responsible approach to development that is guided by existing research and ongoing evaluation.

Strategies

1. Support five communities

We currently support communities in Indonesia, Afghanistan and Solomon Islands. Assistance to East Timor will cease shortly. We plan to support five communities in total. If over the next two years more resources become available, these will be used to improve the quality of existing projects rather than continued expansion.

Actions

- ⇒ Identify and support two communities as soon as possible. Preferably one in East Timor.
- ⇒ Identify three to four additional projects for potential support.

2. Improve quality of support

Through improved understanding of development issues and project management practices.

Actions:

- ⇒ Develop a monitoring and evaluation framework that supports organisational learning.
 - : Undertake bi-annual review of IF and include an independent reviewer in the process. Undertake annual project reviews and, where possible, include peer review. Incorporation of actions identified in Annual Review 2004 to be evaluated. Must ensure that capacity building is taking place and address issue of dependency
 - : Develop a process of peer discussion and evaluation for project managers and use this to
 - Identify training needs and develop and deliver training
 - Improve policies & procedures.

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- ⇒ Build project-based alliances 'on the ground'
- ⇒ Topical issue discussed at each MC meeting, may involve guest speaker. One hour
- ⇒ Circulation of development articles and papers.
- ⇒ Update key development areas. Consider more focus: public health and public education.

3. Join a development community

Affiliate with a global, regional or national community development structure or network of like-minded organisations that will allow us to:

- a) Access information relevant to our approach and projects
- b) Disseminate information on our projects
- c) Participate in broad movements for social and political change that benefit our partner communities.

Action

- ⇒ Identify and join appropriate organization or network, taking into consideration joining sectoral organisations (public health) based on key development areas, and the impact on IF's identity.
- ⇒ Nominate person to manage involvement.

4. Contribute to increased public awareness and critical discussion of development

Action

- ⇒ Pursue partnership with University of Wollongong to generate greater profile of and use for IF Development Award.
- ⇒ Include more development issue based articles in newsletter, target academic and/or outside practitioners to write articles.
- ⇒ Seek academic to write 'think piece' for Annual Report.
- ⇒ Explore support for Canberra based development forum.
- ⇒ Explore possible links or areas of collaboration with UNIFEM.

B. Objective - Improve organisational sustainability by focusing on people & funds

For IF, a small volunteer organisation, the issue of dependency on key volunteers and key supporters is paramount. We need to ensure, to the extent possible, that IF can operate as independently from these individuals as it can. At the same time we need to make IF an organisation that people want to keep working for, and supporting.

- To **creatively** develop an organisation that values its staff, and promotes a flexible and fulfilling working environment.
- To **ethically** manage our financial resources, and provide accurate and complete information to IF membership.

Strategies

1. Strengthen management structures

Since IF began, the tension between volunteer status and demands on time has been an issue. Now that a growing number of people are working (or want to work) for IF it is necessary and opportune to restructure.

Action –

- ⇒ Management Committee to focus more exclusively on strategy, providing support and guidance to key management roles such as Co-ordinator, Finance Administrator, Fundraiser and Project Managers.
 - : Separate the Chairperson and coordinator role, monitor in SS's absence
 - : Separate Project Manager position from Management Committee
- ⇒ Establish process to induct and maintain PM's
- ⇒ MC Rep to visit country once every 3 years (PM visits 2/3 years)
- ⇒ Employ Co-ordinator by June 2007
- ⇒ Increase diversity and develop succession plan

2. Maintain internal motivation and cohesion

Working in a 'virtual' office presents unique challenges, not least of which is keeping everyone motivated. The most effective way of doing this is by ensuring people are 'kept in the loop' about IF through face-to-face, meetings, and regular phone and email contact. Communication and relationships are the basis of IF's management.

Action

- ⇒ Increase communication between Management Committee members and Management Committee members and volunteers.
- ⇒ At least one social function in Wollongong, Sydney, Canberra and Melbourne to be arranged for volunteers.

3. Generate adequate funds through sustainable fundraising

Fundraising is the least enviable, yet one of the most crucial jobs in IF. **ALL** Management Committee members must take responsibility for raising funds – the burden needs to be spread. Our aim as always is to pursue strategies that will lead to long-term support requiring decreasing input.

Action

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- ⇒ Set fundraising target as \$20,000 as a base for next two years. Set target for 2007-2008 to include paid position.
- ⇒ Submit DGR application.
- ⇒ Increase membership to 100 ALL MC June 2005
- ⇒ Develop fundraising strategy for next two years, including MG, SK and KS
- ⇒ At least one fundraising event or action per Management Committee member
- ⇒ Maintain professionalism