

# ICROSS

## Strategic Plan



CREATED SEPTEMBER 2006

### WHO WE ARE:

ICROSS (International Community Relief of Suffering and Starvation) is a non-government organisation, established in Ireland in 1979 as a registered charity. ICROSS is also registered in Kenya, Tanzania, Canada and the United Kingdom.

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## Introduction

In developing our corporate policies we seek to create a dynamic forward-looking organisation that will be able to respond to emerging challenges and needs in a rapidly changing world. Together with our partners, we are moving forward embracing new ideas and innovative approaches, learning from the wisdom and experience of the past. We are building on evidence and introducing fresh, exciting ideas and directions. Our vision of a better world inspires us, our mission focuses us, and our shared goals unite us. With effective planning, transparency, and clear direction, we will be able to really create lasting change.

## Mission Statement

**Our aim is to reduce disease, suffering and poverty among the poorest on earth. Our projects are implemented through the values and beliefs of the people themselves. Together we create self-reliance and work towards long term positive change.**

## Who We Are

ICROSS is an international Non-governmental organisation working in partnership with civil society organisations, non-governmental organisations, governments and bilateral agencies including the Japanese and Irish Governments, multi-lateral organisations such as the Global Fund, the European Union, the World Health Organisation and other United Nations agencies.

## Where We Work

ICROSS began its work among pastoral communities in East Africa in 1980. Over the past twenty-six years, we gradually extended the coverage of our work from central Kenya to vulnerable communities in the Western Provinces of Kenya, particularly in the areas of HIV/AIDS. We work in Samburu, Kajiado, Nakuru, Bungoma, Nzoia, Siaya, Bondo, Buret and Mumias in Kenya and Arusha, Dodoma and Monduli in Tanzania. In addition, we provide technical and material support to an extensive network of partner national local NGOs and mission-based projects in seven African countries and in Asia.

## What We Do

ICROSS works with the resources, capabilities and capacities of poor marginalized communities seeking to strengthen their capacity to improve their own health and livelihoods through the rights based approaches of participation, inclusion and community empowerment processes. ICROSS has fully documented its vast experience in disease prevention and control amongst these disadvantaged communities. This experience is informing national and international best practice on critical areas such as HIV/AIDS prevention, home-based care for those infected with HIV/AIDS and succession planning for orphans and vulnerable children through our Children in Distress Programme. It also specialises in developing innovative cost effective approaches to poverty reduction.

ICROSS' long term strategy works through rights based approaches, recognizes and supports Government strategic plans such as the National Poverty Reduction Strategy, The National AIDS Strategic Plan, National Health Sector Strategic Plan; National Malaria Control Strategy Paper including WHO supported Roll Back Malaria programme. ICROSS plays an active role in providing data that supports evidence based policy development and through documented best practice provides research outputs that inform policy, planning and practice at all levels. ICROSS has contributed to WHO guidelines in Child Survival, Trachoma and Diarrhea control.<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>

ICROSS recognizes that for strategic objectives to translate into effective and measurable development achievements, it is important that they are linked explicitly to programming systems and formal monitoring and accounting structures within the organisation.

ICROSS has adopted results based management calling for clear objectives, indicators and targets, to monitor and measure how a department or project is performing. Each project and activity has established performance indicators reflecting their objectives, ensuring there is cross organisational learning regarding how and whether such data feed into assessments of impact.

Over the next five years ICROSS will adopt the following strategic directions recognizing and adhering to the principals of rights based approaches which provide a framework which informs our understanding of the interrelated institutions and processes which impact upon poverty and rights.

## Key Areas

### **HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria prevention**

Homecare of terminally ill, AIDS orphans and vulnerable children, TB awareness, detection and control, malaria control, maternal transmission education, voluntary counseling and testing, training in disease control.

### **Community Based Primary Health Care**

Training Traditional Birth Attendants, reduction of maternal deaths, gender rights awareness, commercial sex workers support, female circumcision harm reduction, safe motherhood education and girls.

### **Children's Rights and Gender and Development**

Child-to-child sanitation and hygiene, pediatric disease control, child survival, immunisation, primary health care, infant mortality control, AIDS orphans and vulnerable children's rights, child health promotion.

### **Poverty Reduction**

Training health workers in desert areas, trachoma blindness control, diarrhoea control, tribal community health programmes, surgical training, desertification projects.

### **Community Strengthening**

Disease surveillance, women group developments, technical support to small organisations, legal and material support, water and sanitation projects, ICROSS resource leverage, partnership development and networking.

## Developing Strategic Directions

ICROSS is working with its partners preparing for new challenges within a rapidly changing world of rising poverty, increased hunger, resurging and new diseases, and extensive needs. ICROSS dedicates itself to addressing the underlying causes of disease, poverty and social injustice by creating a dynamic facilitative presence in the areas in which we work. **This strategic plan is the result of an ongoing dialogue with partners, stakeholders and all ICROSS offices in six countries.**

## Strategic Directions

- Develop and maintain partnerships based on shared goals and collaboration to create measurable change.
- Develop and implement, through long-term partnerships evidence and rights based approaches to reducing poverty and suffering
- Create a dynamic proactive organisation that responds to the changing needs, problems, decisions and complexities of an uncertain future.

## Building on Scientific Evidence and International Consensus

We incorporate the latest scientific knowledge and evidence. Our network of advisors, colleagues and research networks constantly inform and educate decision making processes. We are engaged in International research consortia and alliances keeping our planning and policies up to date with the latest thinking and lessons being learnt. ICROSS is “**evidence led**” using results based operational research and management in programmes. ICROSS identifies existing community groups and cultural mechanisms through which to:

- Obtain meaningful contextual information about a specific situation
- Design and implement development programmes including community based information and e-care and disease prevention interventions.<sup>5,6,7,8,9,10</sup>

# Working Through Belief Systems and Existing Knowledge

For over 26 years ICROSS has built close relationships through the values and cultures of those we work with.

Planning and decision making take place in local languages through the world views of the people themselves. We believe that the most effective vehicle for development work is the communities' own belief systems and traditions. People have the right to choose and the right to plan their own future, consequently, anthropological research is a key part of our work.

ICROSS has advocated the use of anthropology and long-term strategies since 1983. Anthropological methodologies and insights are integrated into project design and delivery processes. ICROSS believes that it is essential to understand these dynamics if development initiatives are to be sustained.<sup>11,12,13</sup>

## Policies: International, National, and Local

International policies and priorities, millennium goals and global strategies are incorporated into the strategic planning with UNICEF, UN, G8, UNAIDS and WHO consensus are reflected in our planning. Priorities identified within international medical and health research are absorbed as are national and local policy guidelines and programmatic strategic plans.

## Integrated Approach

We have a holistic strategy of comprehensive health care realizing that health depends on eliminating poverty. Together with a broad alliance of partners and other organisations working together, ICROSS is fighting poverty through a comprehensive menu of disease prevention, public health education, creating new opportunities for communities and long term development.

## Governance and Transparency

Governance is how an organisation runs itself, how decisions are taken, and how we relate to those we work with. It is about our values, standards and professionalism. Transparency is about how open we are in sharing these processes. We have adopted international standards of governance and transparency and are constantly evolving new ways of greater accountability and sharing with stakeholders.

## Our Policies and Standards

ICROSS adheres to best practice standards and has ongoing peer review in both its strategic planning and policy making as well as its public health evaluation, research and development. It meets the standards of national control bodies including those that regulate charities and NGOs. It has signed onto a charter of best practice and meets the highest standards of international scientific and academic research.

## Evaluation and Audits

As part of our pursuit of excellence we regularly have external reviews of management, organisation and financial practice. In 2006, a comprehensive organisational review was completed and management / financial reviews are ongoing. Donor, internal and external independent audits take place annually. All audits are available to all stakeholders.

## Organisation

ICROSS is registered as a charity in five countries. Each country has a Board of Directors. These ICROSS partner organisations are now represented on an International Board.

This board is made up of:

- Representative of each registered ICROSS organisation: Canada, USA , UK, Ireland, Kenya etc
- A Donor Representative
- The International Director
- Country Director Kenya

There is an advisory committee made up of a multi-disciplinary group of specialists and experts who advise on a wide range of issues ranging from public health and disease prevention to governance and management.

The Board of Directors in Kenya meets four times a year and has two subcommittees:

- The financial review committee
- The policy / planning committee
- Development and support committee

## Fiscal Accountability

At ICROSS we aspire to the highest standards in accounting for all funds utilised by the organisation. We recognise that transparency and accountability are essential to good governance.

We seek to comply with relevant governance, financial accounting and reporting requirements in the countries where we are based and operate.

## Financial Process/Policy and Standards

We report at least once a year on our activities and achievements.

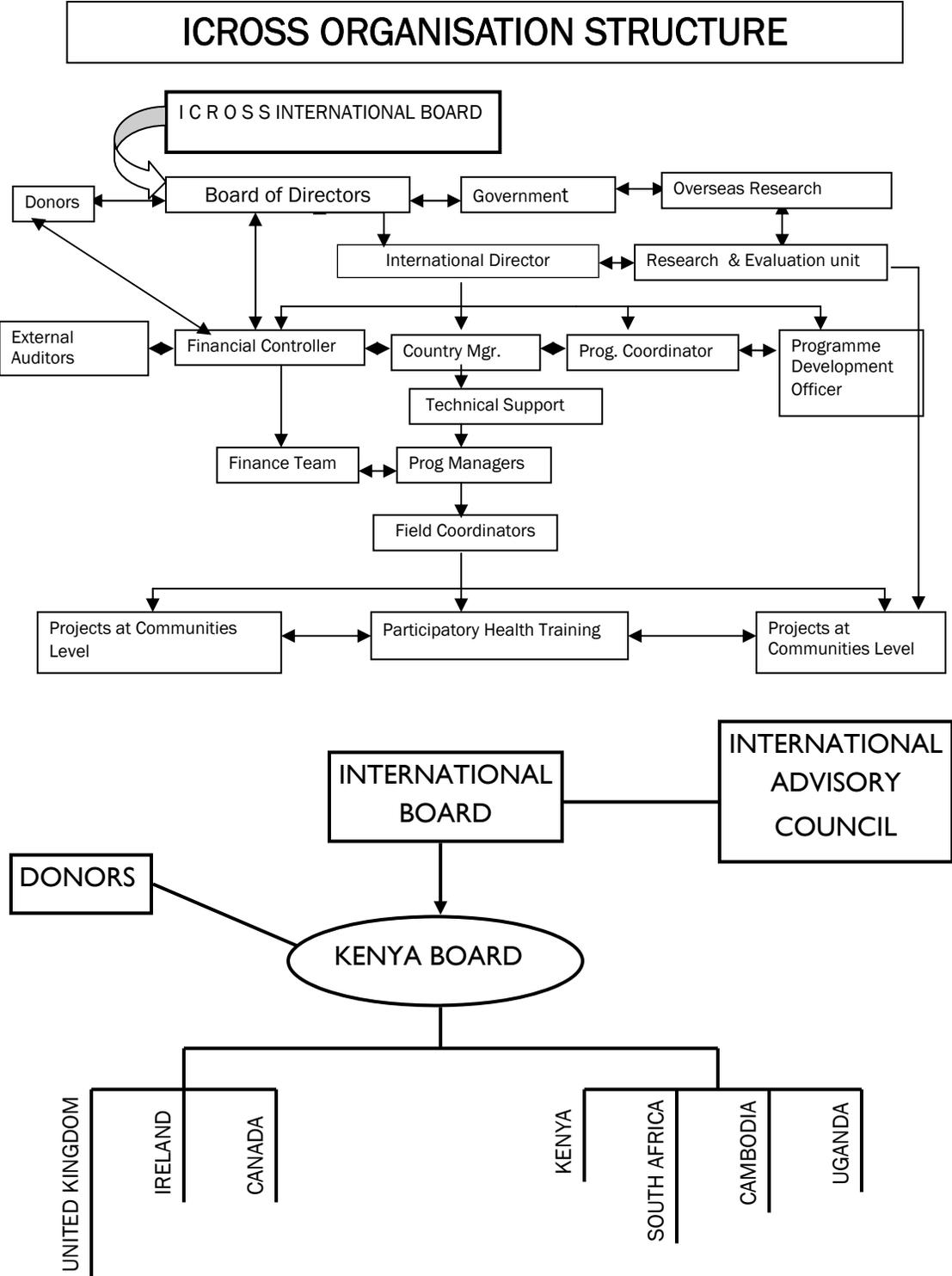
The annual financial report will conform to relevant laws and practices and be audited by a qualified independent public accountant whose statement will accompany the report.

## ICROSS Culture

A spirit of team work is fostered where responsibility is divided among the staff members to achieve the organisation's goals. Staff will be enabled and encouraged to draw management's attention to activities that may not comply with the law or our mission and vision.

# Accountability and Management Structures

The International Director establishes and oversees the strategy for the organisation. The Country Manager oversees the day to day operations and monitors all financial transactions. The Projects Coordinator arranges the implementation of the programmes in the field. The Accounts Team keep track of all financial transactions and record same, ensuring that all programmes remain within budget and that all funds are fully accounted for to the highest possible standard.



# Partnership and Networking

Partnership and Networking between agencies have resulted in coordinated efforts to reduce or control disease prevalence especially when implementing organisations understand national and international strategies. ICROSS believes in creating long-term, local responses that are inclusive and encompass the multi-determinants of health (poverty, gender, stigma etc.), and not just the epidemiological aspects of disease.

ICROSS works in collaboration and partnership with international, regional, national bodies, governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), local community based organisations (CBOs), and community health volunteers.

**International**

It is worth noting that controlling HIV/AIDS requires a multifaceted approach, and no single organisation or method of control would tackle its socio-economic and cultural impact. Enhancing life goes beyond provision of drugs for opportunistic infection to psychosocial support, provided from CDC Community Voluntary Counseling and Testing Services.

**Government Departments**

We Work in close collaboration and consultation with government department, all administrative institutions through the area chief, assistant chief and the village elders our main partners in government are the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, District Development Office, District Aids / STI control Coordinator (DASCO), District Medical Officer of Health (MOH), District Social Development Officer and the Provincial Administration.

**Non governmental Organisations**

ICROSS has collaborators and network with organisations at different levels.

**Local**

ICROSS has established partnerships between the community and other available services in the community. Networks have been formed for all service providers in the projects regions. These networks ensure optimization of available resources. We work at establishing proper referral and networking channels to reduce duplication of activities by providers at the community level.

**Community Groups**

ICROSS projects aim at networking and empowering the local groups with skills of self-care, care for persons living with AIDS and improving livelihood and self-esteem through income generating activities (IGAs). We believe development is not achieved through a one-way communication process, but it should be people-centered in equal partnership. We have close partnership with local women’s groups, youth groups and local community-based organisations.

Networking and collaborating partners include:

**Kenya**

**NGOs and Donors**

**Research Partners**

<p><b>Government</b>                  Ministry of Health                  District Development Committees                  District Commissioners                  District Officers and Chiefs                  Provincial Administration                  District AIDS/STI Coordinator                  Constituency AIDS Committee</p> <p><b>Local Communities</b>                  Traditional Birth Attendants                  Tribal groups                  Women’s groups                  Local leaders                  Community based organisations                  Youth groups                  Community health volunteers</p>
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<p><b>NGOs</b>                  AMREF                  Action Aid                  Teaching Aids at Low Cost                  SENVINET</p> <p><b>Donors</b>                  ICROSS Canada                  Irish Aid                  Stephen Lewis Foundation                  Little Way                  Irish Government                  ICROSS Ireland                  Elizabeth Taylor AIDS Foundation</p>	<p>JHPIEGO                  FHOK                  Lions Doctors                  Mercy Fund                  CIDA                  JICA                  Mercury Trust                  AIDLINK                  Global Fund</p>
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<p>University of Ulster                  Institute of Child health                  CSIR                  Eidgenössische Anstalt für Wasserversorgung, Abwasserreinigung und Gewässerschutz                  McMaster University                  Institute of Water and sanitation Development                  Centro De Investigaciones Energeticas, Medioambientales Y Technologicas                  University of Leicester                  International Community for the Relief Of Suffering and Starvation                  Universidad de Santiago de compostela</p>
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## Rights

ICROSS is a rights-based organisation. We believe in the Rights of communities to decide their own priorities through their own language and culture. We believe that women's rights are an essential core of our work. This is reflected in ICROSS targeting 80% of our projects to work through women and women's groups. We support a wide range of training and capacity building programmes for women and 95% of our local volunteers are women.

We uphold the UN Charter on Human Rights and the millennium goals especially those focusing on children's rights. Our projects seek to create a better healthier world for vulnerable children, and our 5-ar plan will see an international scaling up of our child health programmes.

ICROSS respects the rights of our team, staff, partners, and collaborators to work as equals with a voice and equal involvement in planning and decision making. We advocate the rights to choose, plan, and determine one's own future.

## Self-Learning

As a learning organisation we can identify training opportunities in four sectors:

### **Organisation**

ICROSS is growing dynamically. As it does so, it needs to learn from other international organisations how to successfully evolve as an effective international organisation.

ICROSS is continually listening and learning from larger partner NGOs, from external evaluations, peer reviews, outside specialists, audits, and evaluations. We are continually building on lessons learnt, examining areas of growth and creating better processes.

The International Advisory Board includes senior managers from much larger organisations as well as professionals from legal, financial, and business backgrounds. We are constantly updating our teams on the latest and best management practices and donor requests as well as professional standards and operational systems.

As we grow, these lessons will strengthen the Board of Directors, structure, and vision of our work.

### **Management**

We identify gaps within the skills-set of the management team, and expand the team or replace members to ensure we have the capabilities to adequately deal with the present and forthcoming challenges.

### **Programmes**

We study our projects to search for opportunities to strengthen their implementation. We exploit the knowledge of the many volunteers who join the organisation to impart their knowledge and enhance our projects.

### **Community**

Community Capacity Building is a key component of ICROSS programs. We place a significant emphasis on training within the communities we support. We help establish Community Based Organisations (CBO's) and train them in topics from Home Based Care for Aids patients, to Traditional Birth Attendants and setting up Income Generating Activities.

### **Individuals**

Staff members are counselled to ensure they can handle the challenges they face both now and for the future. Opportunities are identified for training and resources allocated to bridge the knowledge gap.

## Measuring the Long Term Impact

ICROSS has a long established record in measuring and assessing the long-term impact of public health interventions. One of our great successes is the way in which we establish long-term scientific evaluation of health interventions. For over 26 years, ICROSS has been pioneering a range of innovations and researching the impact of our programmes.

The research and evaluations programmes will see considerable expansion in 2007-2011 and a series of international collaborations begin on multi-country studies with a consortia of scientific institutions.

Evidence is central to our policy and planning. The only way long-term impact and change can be established is by scientific validated and externally verified research. We are currently running 14 scientific evaluations and studies, some of which are 20 year prospective studies. We publish all our findings in international peer-review journals.

## Financial Audit

Every year our projects are audited by external accounting firms. Our plan is to engage auditors of the highest international reputation. Some programmes (such as the Global Fund) are audited by the sponsors own audit firm. The audits work as a learning process, when any recommendations are embraced to further improve our processes.

When examining different implementation options and asset purchases we utilize Cost Benefit Analysis. Internal financial control procedures will ensure that all funds are effectively used. We follow principles of best practice in financial management.

## Websites and Sharing Information

ICROSS shares results, findings, progress, and needs with countries and partners. It is also developing new ways of showing its work through the Internet. We are building new and improved interactive websites to share our mission, vision, projects, and activities. In 2006, we are launching new web resources, links, advocacy programmes, campaigns, and news on our sites.

We will be sharing more information than ever with weekly bulletins, notice boards, events pages, news of all projects and visitors, financial updates, and appeals.

## Attitudes and Behaviours Within ICROSS

Our attitudes and behaviour reflect the nature of ICROSS.

Our teams, collaborators, partners, staff and leaders should share common attitudes and behaviour:

- A respect for the integrity of the African people and a trust in the wisdom and culture of the people.
- A humility and respect for the knowledge and cultures of those we are working with.
- A people-first approach.
- An attitude of equality and openness, accepting others without bias. ICROSS does not discriminate and is an equal opportunity partner.

ICROSS believes in holistic cultural integration working through the beliefs, existing knowledge and ways of the people through their language. Understanding of local culture is essential to our approach.

# Our Core Areas of Development

Activities lie in these five priority areas:

## **HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria prevention**

Homecare of terminally ill, AIDS orphans and vulnerable children, TB awareness, detection and control, malaria control, maternal transmission education, voluntary counseling and testing, training in disease control.

## **Community Based Primary Health Care**

Training Traditional Birth Attendants, reduction of maternal deaths, gender rights awareness, commercial sex workers support, female circumcision harm reduction, safe motherhood education and girls.

## **Children's Rights and Gender and Development**

Child-to-child sanitation and hygiene, pediatric disease control, child survival, immunisation, primary health care, infant mortality control, AIDS orphans and vulnerable children's rights, child health promotion.

## **Poverty Reduction**

Training health workers in desert areas, trachoma blindness control, diarrhoea control, tribal community health programmes, surgical training, desertification projects.

## **Community Strengthening**

Disease surveillance, women group developments, technical support to small organisations, legal and material support, water and sanitation projects, ICROSS resource leverage, partnership development and networking.

ICROSS has seen considerable growth since 2002. In building an international organisation to meet the new challenges over the next decade, we have begun considerable restructuring within the organisation. Internal communication, creating new leadership, improving communication and involving partners in decision making are part of the process.

In creating a strong organisation we are building on our skills and learning new ones. We are strengthening international and national partnerships and establishing new campaigns as our advocacy programmes develop.

## Future Programme Priorities

HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria prevention, gender rights, children's health, community empowerment, and supporting the creation of local capacity.

## Aims and Objectives

The aim of our work is the long-term control of disease and the alleviation of poverty within vulnerable communities. To achieve this the communities we work with must be empowered to take ownership of development initiatives, to participate effectively in decision making, to bring about relevant changes in their lifestyles and behaviour and take full responsibility for the improved health and development of their communities. This will be our focus during the implementation of our future programmes and activities. They will form the basis for determination of future priorities.

Amongst traditional communities, respected community members provide the most effect vehicle for bringing about change. It is for this reason that our work focuses on supporting and facilitating local change agents such as the traditional healers and birth attendants. We will be guided by our vast experience in this area when determining future programme needs and priorities.

## Summary of the ICROSS 5-Year Plan (2006-2011)

In the next 5 years, ICROSS will bring about measurable improvements in the health and nutrition status of the members of the vulnerable communities. In the case of HIV/AIDS, our focus will continue to be the support of home-based care that will help alleviate the pain and suffering of the HIV patients and their careers.

Over the next five years we are focusing on HIV/AIDS a disease of poverty as much as a viral infection, which is destroying Africa and devastating whole nations. Working with countries to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS as well as helping them to care for the dying is essential. The scale of suffering among children orphaned from AIDS has not yet been fully understood and ICROSS is at the front in targeting its interventions towards the protection of children in distress. In addition ICROSS recognizes women's rights and the ability of communities to respond to the spread of poverty as central to the direction and success of our programmes.

## Future Needs

To implement these programmes we will target a population of more than 1.5 million people many of whom barely survive in some of the harshest terrains in the world or in urban slums, on the edges of Africa's growing cities. Over the next five years ICROSS will require approximately \$1 million per year. Fifty percent of these funds will be generated from our current donors. However, we recognize the need to increase our on-going efforts to attract more donors to these cost effective programmes.

## Building an International NGO

We are implementing the recommendations of our organisational review which was fully endorsed by the board of directors. We are improving communications between the boards and directors from partners. ICROSS groups will be making regular visits to the projects. Detailed monthly operational and financial reports will be internally circulated and the international board will ensure strong communication and feedback from active boards in each country. As we grow, there is a need for ensuring the national structures in the UK, Ireland, and USA. Ongoing financial reviews and planning will set out steps for this growth.

## International Campaigns and Advocacy

ICROSS has been involved in many campaigns in the past. We are creating new campaigns and are part of larger initiatives like Make Poverty History. We are working with many groups to create a series of awareness campaigns, including Terre D'Africa (Italy), Grace (Ireland), and an international exhibition Africa Awakes (London, Milan, Toronto 2008).

Campaigns are being planned on child health, water borne disease, the future of nomads and vulnerable children.

## Improving Networks

Internationally, we are establishing new relationships and collaborations all the time. We have an active policy to participate as much as possible in the broader international development community. While already networked with some of the largest international alliances of organisations, we are sharing more information and ideas than even before. In 2006, we have answered over 4000 requests for information and research from NGOs in 18 countries. We are developing better communications between programmes, partners, country boards, organisations, and donors. We are establishing an Information Unit Board in Kenya to help develop new networks.

## Improving Communication

We hold weekly management meetings between the programme managers and the accounts team to raise awareness of advances in the programme delivery and address any issues affecting its performance.

The extended management team including the field managers gather at HQ every month to improve transparency and address issues affecting the managers implementing our programmes.

## Strengthening Programme Management

We utilize the expertise of qualified international consultants to report on the organisations' strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. We endeavour to adopt such recommendations to improve our processes and make appropriate changes to meet the challenges of the future.

## Creating Local Leadership

ICROSS aims to keep their programmes 'owned & run' by Africans. We endeavour to empower the local staff with responsibility and impart the importance of transparency and accountability for present and future donors to continue to support our work.

## Transparency Systems

We are committed to openness, transparency and honesty about our structures, mission, policies and activities. We will communicate actively to stakeholders about ourselves, and make information publicly available.

We are aiming to achieve the highest standards of transparency in our latest 5 year plan. Our accounts will be audited by expert firms of international repute. We aim to publish the summary accounts and the auditors report on our websites. We intend to become full signatory members of the International NGO Accountability Charter.

We should be held responsible for our actions and achievements. We will do this by:

- Having a clear mission, organisational structure and decision-making process;
- Acting in accordance with stated values and agreed procedures;
- Ensuring that our programmes achieve outcomes that are consistent with our mission; and by reporting on these outcomes in an open and accurate manner.

The governance structure will conform to all relevant laws and be transparent.

We seek to follow principles of best practice in governance. We will have at least:

- A governing board to oversee programme and budgetary matters. It will define overall strategy, consistent with the organisational mission, ensure that resources are used efficiently and appropriately, that performance is measured, that financial integrity is assured and that public trust is maintained;
- Written procedures covering the appointment, responsibilities and terms of members of the governing board, and preventing and managing conflicts of interest;
- An annual evaluation of the efficacy and effectiveness of the strategic and five-year plan at international board level and review of the governance and management systems within ICROSS.

We will listen to stakeholders' suggestions on how we can improve our work and will encourage inputs by people whose interests may be directly affected. We will also make it easy for the public to comment on our programmes and policies.

## Partnerships

We work with partners who share common goals.

Government partnerships have always been central to our implementation in sustaining change. ICROSS has close working relationships with the local government administrations, in particular the Ministry of Health, District Development Committees, District Commissioners and with District Officers and Chiefs.

Many of our relationships have stood the test of time as with the London Institute of Child Health, The Mercy fund, Tom Dooly and Ireland Aid together, AMREF and The Little Way Association, our partnerships include long-term relationships that span decades with NGOs such as AIDLINK, Family Health International, Teaching Aids at Low Cost, Little Way, Marie Stopes International and Electric Aid.

Critically ICROSS has close working relationships with a multitude of nomadic communities, tribal groups, women's groups and local leaders across East Africa.

Our partners in development include JICA, Japanese Embassy, Lions Doctors, CIDA and Development Co-operation Ireland.

New partnerships include 9 research institutes 5 new NGOs that we collaborate with and 13 Community based organisations.

## Making an Impact

ICROSS has fully researched, demonstrated and documented long-term shifts in mortality and morbidity through numerous collaborative studies, all published in major peer review journals. We continue to share ways in which real and measurable changes take place in communities.

We continue to share our research work and create new opportunities of disseminating information at national and international level.

ICROSS presents its work at different conference, seminars and workshops. In 2006, the model of ICROSS health programming has been presented in 3 major international presentations.

ICROSS employs 26 programme staff, a small technical support team of 8 who provide logistical support to the field, and over 500 local volunteers. In 2006, the organisational capacity of ICROSS was reviewed, systems and protocols were strengthened and management, financial and technical staff and teams were trained to increase their capacities thereby allowing for further expansion of programmes.

## Contributions by Beneficiary Communities

Beneficiary communities contribute to the cost of the programmes that are implemented through voluntary services, labour and materials. Over 40% of the actual cost of all projects is donated in kind.

## The Way Forward

Today there are more people living in absolute poverty than ever before. More people are hungry and sick than ever before. Twenty-four thousand people die of hunger every day in those countries that have been labeled under-developed.

The way forward is to create sustainable solutions leading to radical change through addressing the underlying causes of rising poverty in Africa. ICROSS will not be addressing this critical issue alone – but in collaboration with our many partners, friends, communities, families and individuals who we work with.

The strategic directions of ICROSS outlined above will allow us to become more effective and proactive tripling our reach by 2011, guided by evidence based operational research as demonstrated in our published research, our commitment to rights-based approaches and our partnership through community and cultural ownership.

The activities outlined in the 5-year plan will bring to life the mission and vision of ICROSS. The way forward is in collaboration and close partnership with all those whose lives we seek to positively affect, allowing us to evolve organically while responding rapidly to changing situations and needs.

The action plan over the next 5 years depends on ICROSS' ability to access new resources internationally supporting our progress as an organisation able to respond to communities needs within an ever-changing environment. Internationally, ICROSS will need to triple its fund-raising ability by 2008 and will need to be able to attract new donors as it scales up to meet the new challenges ahead.

We are an independent non-profit organisation that works globally to advance human rights, sustainable development, environmental protection, humanitarian response and other public goods. Our organisation is proud and privileged to work across a range of countries and cultures, with a diverse range of peoples and in varied eco- and social and political systems.

Our right to act is based on universally-recognised freedoms of speech, assembly and association, on our contribution to democratic processes, and on the values we seek to promote.

Our legitimacy is also derived from the quality of our work, and the recognition and support of the people with and for whom we work and our members, our donors, the wider public, and governmental and other organisations around the world. We seek to uphold our legitimacy by responding to inter-generational considerations, public and scientific concerns, and through accountability for our work and achievements. We seek to promote further the values of transparency and accountability that we stand for.

### **How We Work**

As an INGO we can complement but not replace the over-arching role and primary responsibility of governments to promote equitable human development and wellbeing, to uphold human rights and to protect ecosystems.

We also seek to promote the role and responsibilities of the private sector to advance human rights and sustainable development, and protect the environment.

We can often address problems and issues that governments and others are unable or unwilling to address on their own. Through constructive challenge, we seek to promote good governance and foster progress towards our goals.

We seek to advance our mission through research, advocacy and programmes. It is common for our work to be at the international, national, regional and local levels, either directly or with partners.

We work with other organisations where this is the best way to advance our individual missions.

### **The Charter's Purpose**

This Charter outlines our common commitment to excellence, transparency and accountability. To demonstrate and build on these commitments, we seek to:

- identify and define shared principles, policies and practices;
- enhance transparency and accountability, both internally and externally;
- encourage communication with stakeholders; and
- improve our performance and effectiveness as an organisation.

We recognise that transparency and accountability are essential to good governance, whether by governments, businesses or non-profit organisations.

Wherever we operate, we seek to ensure that the high standards which we demand of others are also respected in our own organisations.

The Charter complements and supplements existing laws. It is a voluntary charter, and draws on a range of existing codes, norms, standards and guidelines.

We agree to apply the Charter progressively to all our policies, activities and operations.

We will refine the Charter through experience, taking into account future developments, particularly those that improve accountability and transparency.

### **Our stakeholders**

Our first responsibility is to achieve our stated mission effectively and transparently, consistent with our values. In this, we are accountable to our stakeholders.

Our stakeholders include:

- Peoples, including future generations, whose rights we seek to protect and advance;
- Ecosystems, which cannot speak for or defend themselves;
- Our members and supporters;
- Our staff and volunteers;
- Organisations and individuals that contribute finance, goods or services;
- Partner organisations, both governmental and non-governmental, with whom we work;
- Regulatory bodies whose agreement is required for our establishment and operations;
- Those whose policies, programmes or behaviour we wish to influence;
- The media; and
- The general public.

In balancing the different views of our stakeholders, we will be guided by our mission and the principles of this Charter.

### **Principles**

#### ***Respect for Universal Principles***

INGOs are founded on the rights to freedom of speech, assembly and association in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We seek to advance international and national laws that promote human rights, ecosystem protection, sustainable development and other public goods.

Where such laws do not exist, are not fully implemented, or abused, we will highlight these issues for public debate and advocate appropriate remedial action. In so doing, we will respect the equal rights and dignity of all human beings.

#### ***Independence***

We aim to be both politically and financially independent. Our governance, programmes and policies will be non-partisan, independent of specific governments, political parties and the business sector.

#### ***Responsible advocacy***

We will ensure that our advocacy is consistent with our mission, grounded in our work and advances defined public interests. We will have clear processes for adopting public policy positions, (including for partners where appropriate,) explicit ethical policies that guide our choices of advocacy strategy, and ways of identifying and managing potential conflicts of interest among various stakeholders.

***Effective Programmes***

We seek to work in genuine partnership with local communities, NGOs and other organisations aiming at sustainable development responding to local needs.

***Non-Discrimination***

We value, respect and seek to encourage diversity, and seek to be impartial and non-discriminatory in all our activities. To this end, each organisation will have policies that promote diversity, gender equity and balance, impartiality and non-discrimination in all our activities, both internal and external.

***Transparency***

We are committed to openness, transparency and honesty about our structures, mission, policies and activities. We will communicate actively to stakeholders about ourselves, and make information publicly available.

**Reporting**

We seek to comply with relevant governance, financial accounting and reporting requirements in the countries where we are based and operate.

We report at least once a year on our activities and achievements. Reports will describe our organisation's:

- Mission and values;
- Objectives and outcomes achieved in programme and advocacy;
- Environmental impact;
- Governance structure and processes, and main office bearers;
- Main sources of funding from corporations, foundations, governments, and individuals;
- Financial performance;
- Compliance with this Charter; and
- Contact details.

**Audit**

The annual financial report will conform to relevant laws and practices and be audited by a qualified independent public accountant whose statement will accompany the report.

**Accuracy of information**

We will adhere to generally-accepted standards of technical accuracy and honesty in presenting and interpreting data and research, using and referencing independent research.

***Good Governance***

We should be held responsible for our actions and achievements. We will do this by: having a clear mission, organisational structure and decision-making processes; by: acting in accordance with stated values and agreed procedures; by ensuring that our programmes achieve outcomes that are consistent with our mission; and by reporting on these outcomes in an open and accurate manner.

The governance structure of our organisation will conform to relevant laws and be transparent. We seek to follow principles of best practice in governance. We will have at least:

- A governing board which oversees programme and budgetary matters. It will define overall strategy, consistent with the organisational mission, ensure that resources are used efficiently and appropriately, that performance is measured, that financial integrity is assured and that public trust is maintained;
- Written procedures covering the appointment, responsibilities and terms of members of the governing board, and preventing and managing conflicts of interest;

We will listen to stakeholders' suggestions on how we can improve our work and will encourage inputs by people whose interests may be directly affected. We will also make it easy for the public to comment on our programmes and policies.

### ***Ethical Fundraising***

#### **Donors**

We respect the rights of donors: to be informed about causes for which we are fundraising; to be informed about how their donation is being used; to have their names deleted from mailing lists; to be informed of the status and authority of fundraisers; and to anonymity except in cases where the size of their donation is such that it might be relevant to our independence.

#### **Use of Donations**

In raising funds, we will accurately describe our activities and needs. Our policies and practices will ensure that donations further our organisation's mission. Where donations are made for a specific purpose, the donor's request is honoured. If we invite the general public to donate to a specific cause, we will have a plan for handling any shortfall or excess, and will make this known as part of its appeal.

#### **Gifts in kind**

Some donations may be given as goods or services. To retain our effectiveness and independence, we will: record and publish details of all major institutional gifts and gifts-in-kind; clearly describe the valuation and auditing methods used; and ensure that these gifts contribute towards our mission.

#### **Agents**

We seek to ensure that donations sought indirectly, such as through third parties, are solicited and received in full conformity with our own practices. This will normally be the subject of written agreement between the parties.

### ***Professional Management***

We manage our organisations in a professional and effective manner. Our policies and procedures seek to promote excellence in all respects.

#### **Financial controls**

Internal financial control procedures will ensure that all funds are effectively used and minimise the risk of funds being misused. We will follow principles of best practice in financial management.

#### **Evaluation**

We seek continuously to improve our effectiveness. We will have defined evaluation procedures for our boards, staff, programmes and projects on the basis of mutual accountability.

**Public Criticism**

We will be responsible in our public criticisms of individuals and organisations, ensuring such criticism amounts to fair public comment.

**Partners**

We recognise that our organisational integrity extends to ensuring that our partners also meet the highest standards of probity and accountability, and will take all possible steps to ensure that there are no links with organisations, or persons involved in illegal or unethical practices.

**Human Resources**

We recognise that our performance and success reflect the quality of our staff and volunteers and management practices, and are committed to investing in human resource development.

Remuneration and benefits should strike a balance between public expectations of voluntary-based, not-for-profit organisations and the need to attract and retain the staff we need to fulfil our mission. Our human resources policies seek to conform fully with relevant international and national labour regulations and apply the best voluntary sector practices in terms of employee and volunteer rights and health and safety at work. Human resources policies will include procedures for evaluating the performance of all staff on a regular basis.

**Bribery and Corruption**

Human resources policies will specifically prohibit acts of bribery or corruption by staff or other persons working for, or on behalf of, the organisation.

**Respect for Sexual Integrity**

We condemn sexual exploitation, abuse and discrimination in all its forms. Our policies will respect sexual integrity in all our programmes and activities, and prohibit gender harassment, sexual exploitation and discrimination.

**Whistle-blowers**

Staff will be enabled and encouraged to draw management's attention to activities that may not comply with the law or our mission and commitments, including the provisions in this Code.

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