



2010 - 2012

Keeping members linked,  
learning and supported

Strategic Plan for 2010 – 2012 for the  
International FORUM on Development Service

## About FORUM

- The International FORUM on Development Service (known as “FORUM”) is the most significant global network of International Volunteer Co-operation Organisations. FORUM aims to share information, develop good practice and enhance co-operation and support between its Members. Together, FORUM Members explore innovative practice and research key contemporary issues, focusing on organisational learning and improved practice. This information is shared in person, at conferences and via the website.
- FORUM is a “virtual” organisation as well as a global one. We have grown our global Membership to include Associate Members.
- FORUM holds an annual conference to meet, share, learn and support each other.
- Members continue to find the FORUM network an invaluable resource and want us to continue the opportunities for learning and exchange, especially through research and conference/workshops.
- FORUM is resourced by Membership subscriptions, the staff time and budgets of the organisations providing the Chair and Executive Board of Officers as well as occasional grants.

## The Purpose of FORUM

To promote co-operation between Members

- To provide a framework for exchange of information and experience on international development co-operation.
- To promote joint activities and/or collaboration amongst Members.
- To advocate and increase public awareness about the relationship between international volunteering and development issues such as, social justice and peace, human rights and a sustainable environment.
- To promote the movement of development service towards increased reciprocity and exchange.
- To promote the interests, values and activities of Members.

## FORUM Charter

All Members and Associate Members joining FORUM agree to, and sign, the FORUM Charter. By signing the Charter Members affirm to commit to a set of principles, values and ethical behaviour underpinning international volunteering cooperation.

## Strategic Objective

To deepen Members' active engagement in, and ownership of, FORUM is working in four areas:

1. Growing and Supporting Membership.
2. Sharing and Networking through Information and Learning.
3. Building credible body of knowledge through research.
4. Strengthening our organisational base (Human Resources, Financial Resources, Constitutional and Legal Status).

### 1. Growing and Supporting Membership

*The current experience can be summarised as:*

- A slowly expanding global Membership.
- An effective level of Membership support (payment of fees, serving as Executive Board of Officers, hosting FORUM annual conference).
- The potential for new strategic relationships with Associate Members.

FORUM is committed to growing and supporting the Membership and deepening the level of engagement of our Members and Associate Members. This is because FORUM envisages that a vibrant Membership will result in more sharing, learning and support between each other and lead to improved development practice.

### 2. Sharing and Networking through Information and Learning

*The current situation can be described as:*

- A revamped website which has many new accessible features for interacting and sharing.
- We hold an annual FORUM conference as a global event aimed at senior staff as target participants. This event provides an opportunity for learning, exchange and support as well as strategic thinking and planning in the international cooperative network.
- We have established an Executive Working Group to oversee each FORUM annual conference. The Executive Board of Officers can co-opt the hosting organisation onto the Working Group if it is not a full member of the Executive.

*We recognise the value of what we are doing, and aim to continue in:*

- Supporting member led groups in learning and good practice at a programmatic level (which might be done on a regional basis).

- Facilitating the sharing of member initiatives such as events, research and sharing of good practice and learning.
- Working to identify and support Members to host the annual conference at least two years in advance.
- Contribute actively to International Year of the Volunteer + 10 (IYV+10) in 2011 and annual celebration of UN International Volunteer Day 5th December.

### **3. Building a credible body of Knowledge through Research**

*At the present time:*

- A discussion paper series established to create meaningful discussion and insight into a particular area or issue relevant to the next annual conference.
- Creating research that will be meaningful in informing the thinking and practice of international volunteer cooperative organisations and informing the wider discourse on volunteering.
- Supporting Members' involvement in research activities, e.g. UNV research projects.
- Coordinating activities through the FORUM Research Working Group.
- A small research fund.

*Our approach for research is as follows:*

- Defining a set of research protocols to which all research aligns to ensure the standard of research is high.
- Leading and collaborating on key areas of research related to international volunteering and co-operation.
- Research partnerships.
- Building up our own research fund.
- Facilitating Member involvement in research projects.
- Recognising and incorporating partner organisations' perspectives into research activities.

### **4. Strengthening our organisational base**

#### **a. Human Resources**

*Our current model:*

- An elected Executive Board of Officers working through assigned portfolios and working groups.
- A part-time Co-ordinator based within an Executive Board Officer's organisation.
- Commitment from the Executive Board of Officers.
- Support from individual Members on specific projects.

- Support from individual Members to organise the FORUM annual conference.
- Support from individual Members to be part of the FORUM Working Groups.
- A part-time contracted website designer and volunteer support.

*To keep us linked and learning we need engagement by Members to take up opportunities for involvement through:*

- Joining working groups.
- Taking the lead in developing discussion papers.
- Offering to run workshops and give presentations at the annual conference.
- Active interest in serving on the Executive Board of Officers.

## **b. Financial Resources**

*The principles underpinning financial resources will be:*

- Membership subscriptions should cover the cost of information sharing, website up-date and maintenance, member and possibly conference support. This includes the cost of the Co-ordinator post.
- Research fund should support discussion papers, contributions to research projects, and costs to bring researchers to the FORUM annual conference.
- Global and regional conferences should be self-financing or supported by specific grants identified for that purpose, but may be underwritten by FORUM.

*In order to ensure we are effective in the management of our financial resources and accountable to our Members, we will:*

- Implement a reserves policy.
- Develop an annual balanced operating budget based on anticipated income.
- Only undertake research if we have resources in the research fund.

## **c. Constitution and Legal Status**

- The Constitution was previously revised in 2006. New revisions are proposed as of September 2009.
- The legal status of FORUM is currently one of an unincorporated association (UK legal definition).
- Official bank accounts are held in Belgium (Euros) and Australia (Aus dollars).
- FORUM accounts are audited annually to UK standards.

*We will look into:*

- Options for registering FORUM as an appropriate legal entity.

Appendix One: Financial Plan for 2010-2012