



# **STRATEGY** **2022-2026**



**misean cara**  
Mission Support from Ireland





Cover photo:  
Loreto Rumbek Secondary School for Girls, South Sudan  
Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Loreto)  
Photo: Paul Jeffréy

St. Francis Community Integrated  
Care Programme Livingstone, Zambia  
Franciscan Missionary Sisters for Africa  
Photo: Moses Mtonga



# Introduction

Irish missionaries have a long and distinguished history of working with excluded and vulnerable communities overseas, upholding rights to education, health, livelihoods and decent jobs, responding to emergencies, mobilising communities and advocating on their behalf. Their extraordinary work has been acknowledged both at home and abroad as having greatly contributed to international development.

Established in 2004, Misean Cara is an Irish faith-based organisation supporting the overseas development work of missionaries. Collectively, Misean Cara's 88 members work in over 50 countries and are part of a much bigger global missionary network that extends across the world with an extensive reach in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Central to our work is the unique and proven Missionary Approach to Development Interventions (MADI) that is delivering real impact at the local level. Missionaries become rooted in the places they serve. Their long-term commitment to local communities develops strong relationships of trust which then become the cornerstone for effective sustainable development.

Missionaries willingly serve in places others often understandably avoid such as conflict zones or remote, hard to reach areas. They are driven by a passion to see poverty reduced, people's dignity recognised, and basic human rights promoted.

However, Irish Missionary Organisations are changing as the number of Irish serving overseas is falling. A transition to locally led development is taking place. The focus has now shifted to training indigenous missionaries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America - passing on the missionary vision, transferring leadership and establishing new structures for management and oversight.

Religious congregations in Africa, Latin America and Asia are seeing growth in the number of new entrants and a vibrant missionary movement continues to thrive. Irish missionaries play a key role in supporting their local counterparts and in developing their leadership skills. Over the medium to long term, Misean Cara will support this localisation process and assist our members to build the skills and knowledge necessary to continue delivering vital development services.

A key achievement over the course of our last strategy 2017 – 2021 has been the development of a results framework with which we have been able to demonstrate the impact of our work. During this period, Misean Cara funded projects that directly supported 1.5 million people annually and supported missionaries to:

- Provide quality, life transforming education, to over 100,000 children, particularly girls, who would otherwise have been excluded from learning.
- Deliver quality health services and interventions, clean water, and sanitation to over 625,000 people annually.
- Enable 80,000 households each year to grow their income, improve food security and have a more nutritious diet.
- Assist 450,000 people annually through human rights-focused projects that have resulted for example in security of tenure for landless people, legal redress for victims of forced evictions and other injustices.
- Respond to local, often ignored, sudden onset emergencies as the need arises.

In 2008 the leaders of missionary congregations came together to support the newest country on earth, South Sudan.

Solidarity With South Sudan is a unique collaboration and commitment of religious congregations and highly trained people from diverse cultures working together in community to provide needed capacity building skills within South Sudan

Irish Missionaries joined their colleagues from around the world to establish schools, train teachers and provide healthcare with the intent of handing over the programme to the South Sudanese Church.

At a time where a new country emerging from decades of war had little investment in education and health, Irish Missionaries have been at the forefront of development there.

## With Mísean Cara support, Irish Missionaries have also contributed to changes in legislation and policy at national levels. Drawing on their practical experience they have helped to strengthen education and health systems and progress human rights.

The Irish Aid programme has generously supported the work of Mísean Cara since its inception, for which we are extremely grateful. However, we also need to diversify our funding. In recent years we have begun to generate new partnerships and are also exploring additional potential sources of income. We have also introduced a member contribution scheme.

Following the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and more recently the Ukraine conflict, development gains have been halted and, in some cases, reversed. The negative impacts on societies and the global economy are still emerging but as cost of living and pressure on food prices grows globally, the impacts will be felt most severely by the poorest people. Over the course of our new strategy, Mísean Cara will continue to support interventions that we know work well. Meeting basic development needs such as access to education, health, water and sanitation must remain central to our work. Promoting human rights is still at the heart of the international development agenda and will remain a key part of our work.

However, the climate crisis has become the most pressing issue globally and urgent action is necessary to mitigate against its worst impacts, including changing weather patterns and the loss of biodiversity. Promotion of resilient agricultural practices, food security and access to renewable energy will be given priority in our support as we move forward.

Mísean Cara will continue to prioritise those left furthest behind in development terms, recognising that poverty, exclusion and vulnerability have multiple dimensions, including income levels, ethnicity, gender, age and ability.

Mísean Cara will continue to serve its members in Ireland in practical ways to help them maximise the impact of their work. We will review and streamline our ways of working. We will continue to diversify our funding streams to create

new opportunities for members to access grants. We will invest in our communications to raise the profile of Irish Missionary work and emphasise the unique missionary approach to development.

Mísean Cara will prioritise capacity development of local leadership and strengthened governance systems in recognition of the longer-term transition of missionary organisations. Internally, we will continue to develop our team culture and strengthen Mísean Cara as a learning organisation supporting our members.

This strategy has been developed in consultation with our members, staff, board and donors, following a review of achievements over the last five years, an analysis of current trends and challenges and the priorities for the future. We are grateful to them all for their valuable insights and suggestions and we look forward to working closely together to deliver on the new strategy.

## WHAT'S DIFFERENT?

- We will increase our focus on projects that address the climate crisis and help communities to adapt to and withstand shocks.
- We will consolidate and strengthen our capacity development to support the organisational and professional development of Irish members and support localisation processes.
- We will increase our efforts to diversify fundraising to support our members' development work effectively.
- We will review our systems to ensure we support members in the most efficient manner, while effectively managing risk and compliance, as well as adapting to changing development contexts.

# Misean Cara: Strategy on a Page 2022-2026

## Organisational objectives

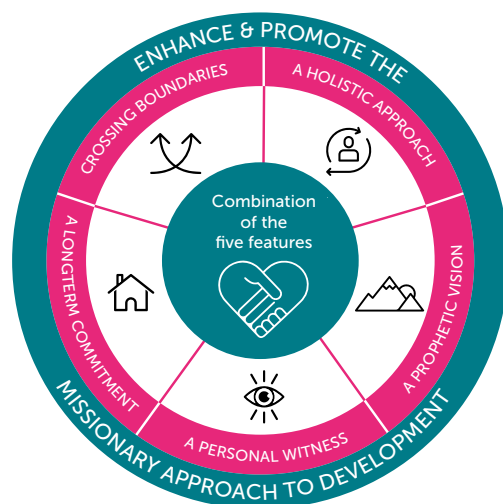
1. Nurture our team culture
2. Increase our profile in Ireland and diversify & increase funding
3. Rationalise & strengthen our member services
4. Develop effective partnerships & alliances

## Our mission

To resource and enable development work with the excluded and most vulnerable

## Our vision

A better world where people who are excluded from society are empowered



## Through members upholding the rights to:



## Our Underlying Values

Respect  
Justice  
Commitment  
Compassion  
Integrity  
Trust

A sustainable learning  
organisation

A better world









# Core Foundations

Our strategy is built on three core foundations - our vision, our mission and our values.

## Our Vision and Mission

We **envisage** a better world where people who are excluded from society are empowered to achieve a better quality of life.

Our **mission** is to resource and enable missionaries to deliver effective development work with the excluded and most vulnerable.

## Our Values

**Justice:** We stand in solidarity with those who are marginalised and advocate for what is right, fair and appropriate.

**Respect:** We have due regard for the feelings, needs and rights of others and for the environment.

**Commitment:** We support the long-term accompaniment of people amongst whom our members live.

**Compassion:** We have empathy with and endeavour to understand the lived reality of others.

**Integrity:** We are transparent and accountable for all our activities.

**Trust:** We act in good faith, to the best of our ability, to fulfil the organisation's mission.

# How we do this (Theory of Change):

## Our Impact

A better world, where people who are excluded from society will be empowered

The Missionary Approach to Development Interventions is central to understanding how Misesan Cara and our members can facilitate change.

- Equitable access to quality education, healthcare, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), human rights, climate resilience and livelihoods and emergency relief
- Raising the voices of the excluded through empowerment and mobilisation
- Links with networks, resources and national processes to identify and challenge root cause of vulnerabilities

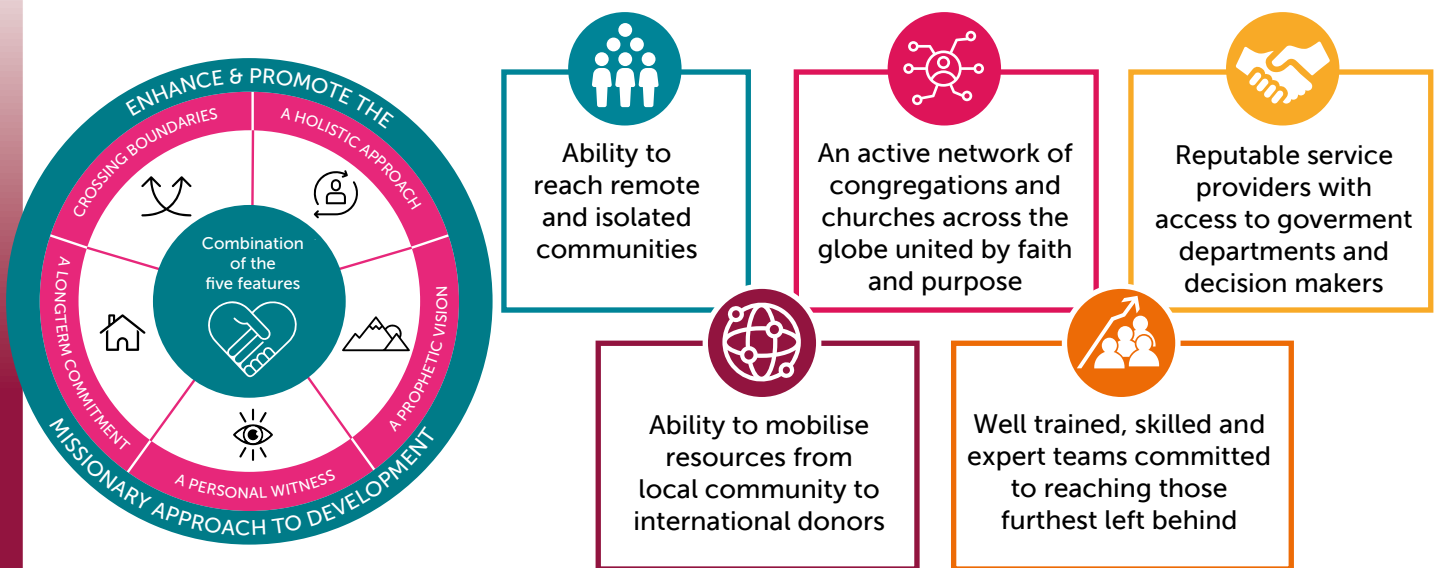
- Communities empowered & mobilised to influence & change norms, policies and practices
- Networking, partnering & advocacy to support communities to build resilience and tackle poverty
- Congregations and partners continue to be strategic, effective, accountable & transparent

- Continuous learning and development

- Contribution to Ireland's development agenda and the SDG's

## Project and Community Level Results

Strengthened by Misesan Cara's accompaniment through training and mentoring including financial, technical and capacity support



## A Unique Approach

## A Strong Network of Missionaries and Lay Staff

### Shared Values



#### RESPECT

Due regard for the feelings, needs and rights of others and the environment



#### JUSTICE

Solidarity with those who are marginalised and advocacy for what is right, fair and appropriate



#### COMMITMENT

Long-term dedication to and accompaniment of people amongst whom we live



#### COMPASSION

Empathy with and understanding of the reality others live



#### INTEGRITY

Transparency and accountability in all our activities



#### TRUST

Shared belief and confidence in the integrity, reliability and fairness of all



## The Missionary Approach to Development Interventions (MADI) was documented through research conducted by Misean Cara in 2017. It encompasses five unique features:

- 1. Crossing boundaries:** Irish missionaries belong to a global missionary network and can draw on the resources of this network for technical, advocacy, cultural and personnel support. The missionary movement is united by common beliefs and purpose which over many years has motivated missionaries to move between countries and use their skills and expertise to help the poor and excluded, but it also means they have an ability to cross invisible boundaries such as those of nationality, identity and the accepted status quo.
- 2. Long term commitment:** Maintaining a permanent presence within communities provides insight into local context, culture and practices enabling tailor made responses specific to the lived realities of the communities that missionaries serve. A long-term presence also affords a high degree of credibility, trust and influence within the communities where they work.
- 3. Personal witness:** The simple lifestyle and solidarity with the poor and excluded enables missionaries to build trust and respect in communities.
- 4. Prophetic vision:** Missionaries build on indigenous knowledge, strengths and capacities within communities. They exploit opportunities that arise, taking risks in starting new interventions.
- 5. Holistic approach:** The missionary approach is person and community centred, treating everyone with dignity and respect.

The MADI promotes collaboration and networking between government, civil society, and community actors, ensuring long term support that is integrated into state services. In the process, community needs are addressed and local capacity is built, generating confidence. The result is change that is tangible, replicable and sustainable over time.

We contribute, through the MADI, to achieving the ambitious targets set out in the UN 'Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' – commonly known as the 17 Sustainable development Goals (SDGs), as well as Ireland's 'A Better World' strategy.

Misean Cara provides the financial, technical and accompaniment support as well as training, mentorship and capacity development that enables our members to deliver development and emergency programmes through the MADI. High quality interventions are implemented in education, health, human rights, climate resilient livelihoods and humanitarian response, areas where missionaries have extensive expertise.



HIV and AIDS project, Thailand  
Marist Asia Foundation  
Photo: Marist Asia Foundation

# Objectives 2022-2026

## Our Goals:

### **Uphold the right to climate resilient livelihoods and decent jobs:**

SDGs 2 and 8, zero hunger, decent work and economic growth are supported through this objective.

Addressing the climate crisis is perhaps the most pressing challenge of our time. The World Bank estimates that the effects of climate change could push an additional 100 million people below the poverty line by 2030, further stretching systems and resources that are already on the brink of collapse. Those living in developing countries are the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and missionaries have become increasingly active in supporting mitigation, adaptation and ecosystem restoration. Malnutrition levels, in all forms, are rising, resulting in diet-related non-communicable diseases. An estimated 149 million children under five are stunted, with over 70% of countries (the vast majority low- and lower-middle income countries) facing a double burden of malnutrition; a high prevalence of both undernutrition and obesity.

#### **Over the course of this strategy we will support our members to:**

- **Improve agriculture, sustainable land practices, food and nutrition security.**
- **Increase household income through skills training, and job creation and improved livelihoods.**
- **Contribute to sustainable local food systems strengthening.**
- **Restore ecosystems.**
- **Access renewable energy and technologies that help with adaptation.**

We will do this through the provision of grants to our members for projects that improve the resilience of communities to the impacts of climate change, help them adapt their livelihood strategies, create new jobs and generate new sources of household income.

### **Uphold the right to quality education:**

SDG 4, quality education calls for inclusive and equitable education, and the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030.

Exclusion from education persists across the world, especially for girls. An estimated 129 million girls were out of school in 2020. In countries affected by conflict, girls are more than twice as likely to be out-of-school. When COVID-19 resulted in school closures, 1.5 billion children and youth were impacted. Education systems across the world are still trying to grapple with persistent closures.

Irish missionaries continue to provide high quality education to poor and excluded children and adolescents around the world through formal and informal education, as well as vocational training. Project teams continue to provide strong support to those furthest behind, with one in four students either living with a disability or identifying as a refugee, migrant or internally displaced person. They also work with local and national governments to shape education policy and practice, including the provision of better qualified teachers, infrastructural developments, participation in research, and initiatives with third-level institutions.

#### **Over the course of our strategy, Misesan Cara will support our members to:**

- **Increase equity of access to education.**
- **Increase quality of education and learning outcomes.**
- **Contribute to education systems strengthening.**

We will do this through provision of grants for education projects that prioritise access to education services for excluded and vulnerable groups. These include formal education projects, as well as informal education initiatives that provide learning opportunities for those who are unable to enter formal education.





St. Paul Nursery School, Riimenze (facility improvement project), South Sudan  
Solidarity with South Sudan / Faithful Companions of Jesus  
Photo: Solidarity with South Sudan



# Objectives 2022-2026

## **Uphold the right to better health, clean water and sanitation:**

SDG 3, Good health and wellbeing seeks to address both persistent and emerging health issues and to eradicate a wide range of diseases. Significant strides have been made in reducing malaria, tuberculosis, polio and HIV and AIDS and life expectancy has been increasing. The emergence of new diseases and viruses remains a threat and universal health service coverage remains woefully inadequate and inaccessible for many of the world's poorest and vulnerable.

Communicable diseases remain a major global public health issue, as we have seen with the rapid evolution of COVID-19 and its variants, and antimicrobial resistance linked with other infections. Women and children are often particularly impacted by communicable diseases. Some 2.2 billion people around the world do not have safely managed drinking water services, an important consideration given the direct link between clean water and the prevention of disease. Susceptibility to non-communicable diseases increases with age. As populations garner the benefits of improved health systems, many are inadequate to provide high-quality services for chronic diseases which now account for 70% of global deaths.

Prior to the pandemic, the World Bank warned of more than half a billion people being pushed or further pushed into extreme poverty because they had to pay for health services out of their own pockets.

Over many decades Irish missionaries have established affordable and accessible health services, safe water sources and sanitation facilities for excluded and vulnerable communities in slums, informal settlements and rural locations. They continue to find new ways to reach those who find it difficult to access these services.

### **Over the course of this strategy Misesan Cara will support our members to:**

- **Increase equity of access, availability, acceptability and affordability of quality health, clean water and sanitation.**
- **Improve health outcomes and well-being of people who are excluded, or living in poverty and vulnerable to climate change.**
- **Contribute to sustainable health services and health systems strengthening.**

We will do this through the provision of grants that improve access and availability of essential health services, particularly prioritising those projects that are aligned to and coordinate with the health strategy of the project country and that provide services to excluded groups and communities.

## **Uphold and advocate for human rights:**

The 2030 agenda for sustainable development, grounded in international human rights standards, strives to leave no one behind and elevates the importance of equality and non-discrimination. However, throughout the world we continue to see injustices and human rights violations against people who lack the means to access their rights effectively. For example, World Bank figures show us that despite there being between 370 and 500 million Indigenous Peoples worldwide (making up 5% of the global population), they account for approximately 15% of the extreme poor, with life expectancy up to 20 years lower than that of non-indigenous people worldwide. Missionaries are ideally placed to raise the voice of the excluded and oppressed and to counter harmful and illegal practices that strip people of their rights.

### **Over the course of this strategy we will support our members to:**

- **Promote and protect the rights of excluded people by improving awareness of, and mobilisation for specific rights or entitlements.**
- **Increase access to and realisation of basic human rights of people experiencing severe or acute human rights violations.**
- **Contribute to systemic change with regard to laws, policies or mechanisms that protect and fulfil the rights of people, and/or their implementation.**
- **Promote and support actions to realise the Right to a Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment.**

We will do this through the provision of grants to members for projects that work with particular groups of people who are excluded or oppressed as a result of their ethnicity, caste, gender, sexual orientation, religion or disability or support human rights defenders. We will particularly focus on projects that aim to change policy or remove barriers that prevent people obtaining their rights and projects that offer protection and support to vulnerable groups.



## Emergency Assistance:

Natural disasters, disease outbreaks, conflict and changing weather patterns can undermine development gains and cause severe disruption and loss of assets to affected communities. Many sudden onset emergencies are localised, causing large damage to small groups of people and it is in these situations that missionaries are particularly well placed to respond quickly to mitigate against loss and harm.

**Over the course of this strategy we will support our members to:**

- **Protect individuals, society, and the environment from immediate harm associated with sudden onset severe natural disasters, unanticipated conflict and disease outbreaks.**
- **Mobilise and coordinate resources to manage the emergency's immediate consequences and help communities recover.**

We will do this through the provision of small grants to members who are present in communities where emergency situations occur and also have the capacity to respond. We will particularly focus on localised sudden onset emergencies that are unlikely to receive assistance from other sources.



Sí Da Vida (HIV and AIDS treatment, care and prevention project), Peru  
Columban Fathers  
Photo: Sí, Da Vida

# Added Value of Misean Cara

As a membership organisation, Misean Cara has access to a unique and extensive network of development workers with exceptional reach across the globe. Irish missionaries have established missions in over 50 countries which retain support from Irish congregations and leverage support globally.

Misean Cara represents our members with donors and decision makers, providing a streamlined service for donors to manage grants, risk and compliance on their behalf. We are able to aggregate the collective results of our members to demonstrate the significant impact achieved by missionaries worldwide.

Misean Cara facilitates good practice learning between our members to gain added value and perspectives from each other's approaches and projects. We bring

the collective learning and experience of our members to the attention of donors, policy makers and the wider international NGO community.

The unique Missionary Approach to Development Interventions reaches people and communities in some of the most challenging locations including conflict zones and remote rural areas, where other actors are unable to maintain a presence.

Misean Cara supports its members to continuously develop their project teams, policies, procedures and systems to ensure adherence to good development practice. This includes training, mentorship and other capacity development initiatives.

## Our Internal Objectives:

### *Nurture our team and culture:*

Our team includes our management and staff, our board and sub-committees, as well as the extensive network of members that we work with, in particular the Missionary Development Officers that serve as the contact point between Misean Cara and the member. These are our most valuable resources.

We will advance a culture that demonstrably reflects the organisation's values, prioritises wellbeing and encourages continuous improvement. Our communication will be comprehensive and respectful. We will prioritise accountability and transparency in our decision making and in our relationships with our staff, our members and our donor partners. We will build trust and diversity in leadership.

Our code of conduct, employee handbook, safeguarding policy and our prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment policy (PSEAH), and health and safety and security policies are the building blocks of this objective.

### *Staff recruitment and retention:*

Retaining valuable skills and expertise, while also being able to attract new talent is critical to delivering on our mission. Misean Cara's development expertise and its support to members is helping to deliver real results and impact. Enhancing the organisation's capacity is a critical priority. We will support retention and recruitment by:

- **Strengthening leadership and management skills within the team.**
- **Strengthening an inclusive learning culture between staff and members.**
- **Actively seeking constructive feedback.**
- **Provide comprehensive induction, learning and development opportunities to our team to ensure they succeed in their role and are given opportunities to develop new skills and expertise.**

### *A diverse and inclusive organisation:*

Being an inclusive organisation is key to building a sense of belonging and engagement, living our values, improving performance, creating space for different views, innovation, and connecting with the people we work to help. We will recruit staff and trustees who will strengthen the diversity of the organisation bringing necessary skills, expertise, innovation and creativity. We will support an inclusive workplace through:

- **Developing and embedding a model of inclusive language to ensure we avoid biases, slang or discriminatory language.**
- **Continue to encourage purposeful leadership (board and management) through recruitment processes that attract diverse candidates.**
- **Encourage a range of viewpoints.**





L





Secondary School for Indigenous Girls, Mindanao,  
Philippines  
Sisters of the Institute of Notre Dame des Missions  
Photo: Sisters of the Institute of Notre Dame des Missions



# Increase our profile in Ireland and beyond to diversify and increase our income

## *Building our profile:*

We want the Irish public to know how Irish Missionary Organisations contribute to development goals and transform lives. We will communicate effectively with our target audience to strengthen a constituency of support for the Missionary Approach to Development Interventions. We will use reinforced messaging through focused media to:

- **Continuously improve our communications content online focusing on engaging and interacting with the public.**
- **Increase activity in print and radio media, focusing on local publications and radio stations.**
- **Maintain a user-friendly website with regularly updated content and calls for support.**

## **Growing and Diversifying our Funding:**

Growing and diversifying our funding is essential to ensure Misesan Cara and its members are able to continue providing services to the communities they serve, strengthen human rights and respond to emergencies. We will work with our members to identify and avail of strategic funding opportunities with a range of international trusts and foundations to:

- **Grow the number of reliable funding partnerships.**
- **Reduce dependence on Irish Aid through an increase in alternative funding sources.**
- **Roll out and embed a membership contribution scheme.**

## **Rationalise and strengthen member services:**

Misesan Cara provides a range of services to its members focused on:

- **Access to funding opportunities exclusively for members.**
- **Mentorship and accompaniment to project teams throughout the project cycle.**
- **Coordinated communities of practice connected to the themes of health, education, climate resilient livelihoods and human rights.**
- **Participation in project monitoring, evaluation, research and learning exercises.**
- **Training and capacity development.**
- **Promotion and profiling of international development projects through our communications.**
- **Safeguarding advice and support.**
- **Advocacy advice and support.**

## **We will refine our services to ensure that:**

- **We rationalise and improve efficiency in the delivery of services, reducing time and costs for both the members and Misesan Cara.**
- **We prioritise services that have the most benefit to members.**
- **There is greater clarity to existing and new members regarding the scope and extent of services available from Misesan Cara.**
- **Assistance is provided, as appropriate, to strengthen member systems.**

### **Strengthen partnerships and alliances:**

Misean Cara has a number of key partnerships and alliances which we will strengthen to enhance our position in the international development sector.

We will continue to support joint initiatives between members. In particular, we will facilitate and encourage our members to collaborate on projects and share learning and experience across the network and with other development actors.

Misean Cara will represent its member organisations at national and international forums and events to promote the Missionary Approach to Development Interventions. We will continue to nurture our current partnerships and represent members in forums such as the Irish Forum for International Agricultural Development, Irish Forum for Global Education, Irish Forum for Global Health and Dóchas among others. We will also seek new alliances through:

- **Working with members engaged with joint advocacy work.**
- **Identifying and investing in alliances that add value to our strategic objectives.**

### **Measuring our Performance:**

Through an established monitoring, evaluation and learning system, Misean Cara collates and aggregates the results that the collective efforts of member organisations achieve. This enables us to publicise the extensive impact of Missionary organisations. We will continue to develop our system to best reflect results and provide opportunities for missionaries and the broader development sector to learn from each other and to track performance during this strategy.









For further information about our work  
or to comment on this Strategy, please contact:

**Misean Cara**

4th Floor, Callaghan House, 13-16 Dame Street,  
Dublin 2, D02 HX67, Ireland

**Tel:** +353 (0) 1 405 5028

**Email:** [info@miseancara.ie](mailto:info@miseancara.ie)

**Web:** [www.miseancara.ie](http://www.miseancara.ie)

**Facebook:** /MiseanCaralreland

**Twitter:** @miseancara

©2022 Misean Cara  
Design by Allen Creative