

# Signs of **Hope**

Strategic Plan 2015-2018



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# 1 | Foreword

ZOA's staff is working every day to change for the better the lives of people who suffer. Through relief and rehabilitation we want to restore hope. Our mandate, given to us by a large and committed constituency, leads us to people who often have lost all hope because of violent conflicts or natural disasters.

This Strategic Plan for the years 2015 – 2018 tells you much about ZOA, what we do and where we plan to go to, but it also tells you how we anticipate and prepare for changes to come; to keep working according to our mandate in a world of which we do not yet know the exact shapes.

The plan builds upon the former Strategic Plan, while including interesting new accents which emerge from our field experience and our observations of current developments. One is the integration of peacebuilding as a sector into our fields of expertise. In the last few years we have realized that peacebuilding is a crucial aspect of hope and recovery in conflict affected areas. Moreover, the assistance to displaced persons in urban areas is also new. The number of people seeking safety in urban areas are huge, and their needs are significant.

I am proud of the fact that as ZOA we are deeply motivated to respond to this cry and to build the expertise that is needed for the specific kind of work we do. With the Disaster Response Unit we have embedded flexibility into our organisation. With our presence in the field we continue to be strongly rooted in the areas and the communities where we work.

I believe that people's lives change through our work. We have a mission to support those who are in need and it is a joy then to see the impact on the lives of many.

May God bless you all.

Johan Mooij  
Chief Executive Officer



## 2 | ZOA's context: who we are

### 2.1 | Our drives and values

#### Why we serve

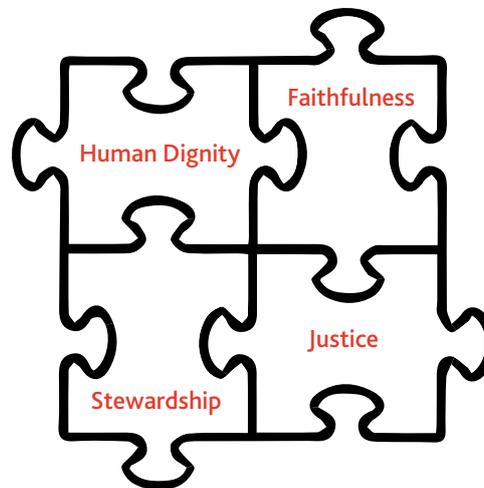
Inspired by our Christian identity and the biblical message of reconciliation and restoration of a broken world, we serve those affected by violent conflict and natural disasters. We do so by contributing to the realisation of hope and restoration. We see this coming about where people can once again experience peace, justice and mutual trust, and where they regain personal dignity and confidence. We act in line with, and contribute to the biblical perspective of God's Kingdom, which is to advance reconciliation and restoration to its full potential, as visible signs of God's call to do justice and be faithful to those who need our support.

#### ZOA's mission

In a world full of conflict, injustice, poverty and disaster, ZOA supports those who suffer because of violent conflicts and natural disasters in fragile states, irrespective of race, gender, ethnicity, religion or age. Through our long-term commitment, we attend to the needs of those we serve, at different stages, from relief to recovery, in a variety of sectors. By working alongside communities, we contribute to signs of hope and restoration, and we ensure people's dedicated participation in rebuilding their lives so as to have a lasting and sustainable impact. We also call on our constituency and partners worldwide to take responsibility and become involved.

#### ZOA's key values

In all that we do and at every level of the organisation, ZOA's staff is united worldwide by a set of common values. We strive to adhere to these values in our attitudes, words and deeds.



#### Human Dignity

We believe that all people are made in God's image. We treat all men, women, boys and girls equally and with respect and make no distinction based on race, gender, ethnicity, religion or age. At the same time, we recognise and value that there are differences amongst people in roles, positions and responsibilities. ZOA respects these (cultural) differences, but also aims to bridge those differences by encouraging dialogue and mutual understanding.

#### Faithfulness

ZOA is committed to lasting involvement in communities affected by conflicts or natural disaster until such time that they are able to walk on their own again. Our responsibility to the women, men, boys and girls we serve is to honour our commitments and be faithful and accountable to them. Even when social, political and security circumstances are discouraging, we aim to continue to provide the support mutually agreed, as long as is reasonable.

## Stewardship

ZOA recognizes and values the capacities of the people we serve and strives to enhance these so they can determine their own strategies to increase their independence and build better futures. At the same time, we aim to employ sustainable approaches that do not negatively affect the communities or the planet on which we live. Finally, ZOA seeks to use its delegated resources in an effective and efficient manner, providing maximum added value, transparency and accountability to those we support and those who support us.

## Justice

ZOA strives for a just world in which people are treated with respect and dignity, in a transparent and non-discriminatory manner. We stand up for the most vulnerable and marginalized men, women, girls and boys to enable them to take control of their own lives, realize their full potential, and improve and strengthen their position. At the same time, we promote awareness about injustice and encourage people all over the world to make their voices heard and to speak out against injustice.

## ZOA's vision for 2015 - 2018

By 2018, ZOA wants to fulfil its mission and support those we serve to achieve lasting change through rebuilding dignified and resilient lives, by

1. being present in rural and urban areas in fragile contexts that are affected by conflicts and natural disaster;
2. being a recognised expert in working alongside communities to attend to their needs;
3. being successful in actively mobilizing our constituency;
4. being known for adhering to the highest professional standards of quality, accountability, sustainability and the responsible use of resources;
5. and being a preferred partner of local and (inter)national governments, organisations, donors and the private sector.



## 2.2 | The context of our operations

The world is changing in a rapid and unprecedented manner. Although change has always affected the humanitarian and development sector, the current pace of change has accelerated significantly. Moreover, today's complex issues cut across sectors and geographies, resulting in an overwhelming scale of natural and human-made disasters, increasing vulnerability and fragility, an accelerating connectivity, more problematic operating environments, and an increasingly constrained funding landscape. These developments change the rules of the game for the sector, demanding a broader agenda, adjusted approaches and innovative solutions.

Today's world is faced with large scale demographic shifts, increasing pressure on water, food and energy resources, collective calls for more democratic and transparent systems, major health epidemics, poverty, and climate change. These very complex global challenges in turn result in other major developments such as migration, massive urbanisation, food insecurity, scarcity of natural resources, a greater frequency of natural disasters, and cross-border conflicts about resources. The impact of these developments and related disasters is increasing, accounting for losses in terms of human, social, economic and environmental assets. At the same time, the scope of national governments to enhance coping capabilities is becoming more and more constrained as globalization increases.

This is particularly the case in fragile states, where the government's institutional and technical capacities are limited. Fragile states, home to one third of the world's poor, are more vulnerable to internal and external shocks than more stable countries<sup>1</sup>. And while other developing countries have made progress on achieving the Millennium Development Goals, this is significantly less in fragile states.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, the aid these fragile states receive is shrinking and there is limited access to alternatives<sup>3</sup>. That makes it even more challenging for these countries to finance their development objectives, making external (financial) assistance increasingly relevant.

The support that can be provided by external actors such as international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) is, however, highly dependent on the revenues they procure. With an increasingly fragmented funding landscape in which funding from traditional donors is declining, and with the rise of new players competing with INGOs for money, the issue of funding is becoming more and more complex<sup>4</sup>. It demands a drastic rethink of how to raise revenues. At the same time, however, these circumstances also present interesting (new) opportunities, especially due to the emergence of the private sector as a development actor, and the rise of new (institutional) donors. Although partnering up with the private sector in fragile states might be challenging, their added value in tackling the most pressing needs and global challenges in fragile states is being recognized more and more. New funding sources, organisational structures and business models can be unlocked through partnerships that focus on impact rather than on funding<sup>5</sup>.

The rapid technological advances which are currently taking place support such development. These advances have shown to contribute to reducing costs of programme delivery, speeding up learning and knowledge sharing, providing a platform to directly engage and connect with people, and improving transparency<sup>6</sup>. This is not only relevant when it comes to increasing the programmatic impact, but also for fundraising, from both institutional and private donors. Particularly for the latter category, engagement and connection are essential elements that can be achieved more easily through technological resources. Although the willingness of the public to give for humanitarian crises maintains fairly stable, the shift in donations from general funds to donations for specific projects or issues is becoming more prominent<sup>7</sup>. Contributions also tend to be more volatile and unpredictable and are usually driven by a specific cause, event or emotion, particularly among the younger generation.

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1 | OECD (2013), *Fragile States, Resource Flows and Trends*, p 3.

2 | *Idem*, p. 13

3 | OECD (2014), *Fragile States 2014, Domestic Revenue Mobilisation in Fragile States*, p. 1

4 | FSG (2014), *Ahead of the curve, Insights for the International NGO of the Future*, p. 12-13.

5 | *Idem*, p. 14

6 | *Idem*, p. 15

7 | Global Humanitarian Assistance (2014), *Emerging findings from the forthcoming 2014 Global Humanitarian Assistance (GHA); Report Highlights*, p.4.

Finding new ways to obtain revenues, connect with institutional and private donors and respond adequately to the global challenges faced requires that the sector lets go of its status quo. This is especially urgent since the number of people affected by global challenges and in (pressing) need of international humanitarian assistance is daunting. At the present time over 50 million people have been forced to flee their homes due to violent conflicts or natural disasters<sup>8</sup>. This figure, the highest since World War II, is consistent with the rise of devastating crises worldwide. The movements of increasing numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) results in ever more pressure and growing tensions at all levels.

At the same time, the cost of helping the forcibly displaced – refugees and IDPs – and their hosts has increased significantly over the last decade. An important shift is also taking place in the location of the people we want to serve. Today over half of the world's 10.5 million refugees reside in urban settings<sup>9</sup>. Since 2008 the balance between the forcibly displaced living in rural areas in comparison to urban areas has tipped over to the latter. This shift is reinforced by two underlying dynamics. First of all, with only one third of the world's forcibly displaced living in camps these days, the number of refugees and IDPs living outside the camps is rapidly increasing<sup>10</sup>. Secondly, there is an overall migration pattern among the poor that shows a move to urban centres in search of safety and self-reliance. This last trend makes it very hard to distinguish refugees, but especially IDPs, from other rural migrants and the wider urban population. Therefore, coming up with specific programmes that locate, advocate for and assist both the forcibly displaced and their hosts is challenging to say the least.

With almost half of the world population living in conflict affected countries, the need to assist these countries and especially their population continues to be highly relevant. And, new areas of conflict continue to arise. Although humanitarian action has become more effective over the years, the highly dynamic and complicated global challenges contribute to stress on existing (inter)national humanitarian systems that are set up to deal with such issues. Actors must continue to search for ways to better adapt to new realities and to the needs of afflicted populations, while alleviating suffering, maintaining dignity and saving lives. Not only are new emergent, integral and innovative approaches required, but also greater flexibility and collaboration on the part of actors within the system, so to provide effective and efficient humanitarian relief efforts and longer term recovery support of affected populations.

Adapting to these new realities around us is key for ZOA in order to provide the most opportune support for the people we serve. We believe it is possible to come up with effective and efficient approaches that respond adequately to their needs. This Strategic plan will build on our current approach and is mindful of lessons learned thus far, but also outlines a more flexible, innovative and open focus that allows ZOA to adjust to the changing circumstances.

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8 | UNHCR (2014), Global trends 2013; War's human cost, p 2.

9 | UNHCR (2009), UNHCR Policy on Refugee Protection and Solutions in Urban Areas, p. 1

10 | Idem, p. 1.

## 2.3 | Our work

ZOA's drives and values are expressed in all that we do, starting with our mandate. ZOA is able to respond on the basis of a **dual mandate**, providing both **relief and (early) recovery** to the people we serve. By departing from a long-term perspective, especially in our recovery work, we lay the ground work for development actions. However, we do not ourselves become involved in development interventions.

In our relief interventions, we work to ensure immediate lifesaving humanitarian response. At the same time, we focus on initiating more lasting interventions such as capacity development actions and institutional reform, which require a longer term approach. With respect to our (early) recovery response, it is from the outset based on our long term commitment to the people we serve.

### How we work

ZOA applies several criteria when deciding whether or not to work in a specific country or area. These are based on our drives and values. As mentioned in our mission statement, ZOA focuses on countries, and regions within countries that are categorised as being 'fragile'. Fragility, as understood by ZOA, is characterized, in different degrees, by the following elements:

- States lack authority due to which they cannot assure basic security, rule of law and justice;
- States lack or have limited legitimacy and representation;
- States are not willing or able to provide adequate basic services to its citizens, particularly to the most vulnerable;
- Local civil societies have limited capacities and humanitarian space is restricted.

Within the category of countries affected by fragility, ZOA specifically focuses on countries with 'conflict-related fragility'. Although fragility is not limited to countries affected by conflict and vice versa, violent conflict is often a main contributing factor to fragility. Moreover, conflict in these fragile states is generally characterized as being protracted, recurrent and intractable. Therefore, 'conflict-related fragility' is an essential characteristic of the context in which we choose to operate.

At the same time, ZOA can also respond to needs that result from natural disasters in either conflict affected or non-conflict affected areas. Although on its own a natural disaster is not considered sufficient reason for ZOA to initiate a longer-term recovery programme, it may motivate ZOA to initiate relief operations. ZOA will not respond to industrial disasters.

Within the context of violent conflict and natural disasters in fragile states, ZOA serves 'those who suffer' due to these situations. The specific groups targeted here include refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), returnees, host communities and households that are affected but not displaced because of conflict. Our support to them is based on their needs and the opportunities for meaningful and positive change, not on identity. We make no distinction based on race, gender, ethnicity, religion or age. On the contrary, we specifically try to address the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalized within society.

The number of people affected is an additional criteria for ZOA to start working in a specific country or area within a country. At country level, 100,000 persons is considered the minimum number required for ZOA to become involved in a new country. For a specific area, this is at least 25,000.

Finally, we believe that it is important that ZOA can have added value in the country or area. Our possible impact for positive change, above and beyond what other actors already present in the area can contribute, is therefore our final criteria in deciding whether or not to initiate a programme.

The **characteristics of ZOA's overall approach** are also deeply entrenched in our drives and values. ZOA's work is characterized by a **long term commitment** to the people we serve. We are faithful to the women, men, boys and girls we support and stay with them until they are ready to walk on their own again. Working up to fifteen or even twenty years in the same country also means that we can be assured of a lasting and sustainable impact.

This quality aspect is reflected in the guiding principles that ZOA adheres to in its relief and recovery approach. These principles stem directly from our key values and are crucial in ensuring a meaningful and high quality impact at community level. The principles are:

- **Inclusion;** within our target group, we include all people affected.
- **Ownership;** we work side-by-side with communities to support them to develop their own strategies to increase their independence and build better futures.
- **Participation;** we ensure the active involvement of all people affected in the different stages of the programme.
- **Accountability and transparency;** we show who we are, what we do and how we do it, and demonstrate that we do what we promise.
- **Sustainability;** we strive to employ lasting interventions that do not negatively affect the communities or the planet we live on.
- **Do no harm;** we seek to work in a conflict-sensitive manner, so to prevent unintended negative consequences to relationships and long term development processes.



Moreover, ZOA chooses to work in both **rural and urban<sup>11</sup> areas**, at local level, alongside the people we serve. By focusing our attention at household and community levels, we place our target group at the centre of our programmes. However, since many of the challenges and needs faced at these levels are not isolated issues, but relate to circumstances outside the community, ZOA also connects with such higher levels. We cooperate with organisations and (inter)national government agencies when necessary to address the challenges faced at community level. We also lobby and advocate for the interest of the people we serve, and support civil society organisations in doing so.

Our work at community level is facilitated by our **local presence** in all the areas in which we work. This enables us to have direct contact with the those we serve and build sound knowledge of, and sensitivity to the specific context, culture and dynamics between the actors present. Moreover, it provides us with the flexibility to resort to our own implementation capacity in areas where no suitable partner is present, or where ZOA appears to be the most suitable actor to take on this role. At the same time, our local presence and operational capacity enable us to work with relatively small and weak local organisations and governments. We can strengthen these, thereby increasing the capacities at the local level, while at the same time learning from their insights and experiences.

The enhancement of community capacity by strengthening local actors is an important aspect of our approach. ZOA considers strong civil society organisations important since they can defend the interest of specific groups, provide innovative and alternative views and hold governments and the private sector accountable. At the same time, due to ZOA's supporting role in realizing lasting change at community levels, we consider it crucial to strengthen the capacity of local governments so they can fulfil their roles and responsibilities in a more effective and efficient manner and reduce dependence on external aid. We therefore actively collaborate with local actors in order to significantly maximize the impact, and increase the sustainability of our support. Where possible, we enter into various partnerships with a diverse range of actors such as community based organisations, non-governmental organisations, government agencies, farmer cooperatives, the private sector and knowledge networks.

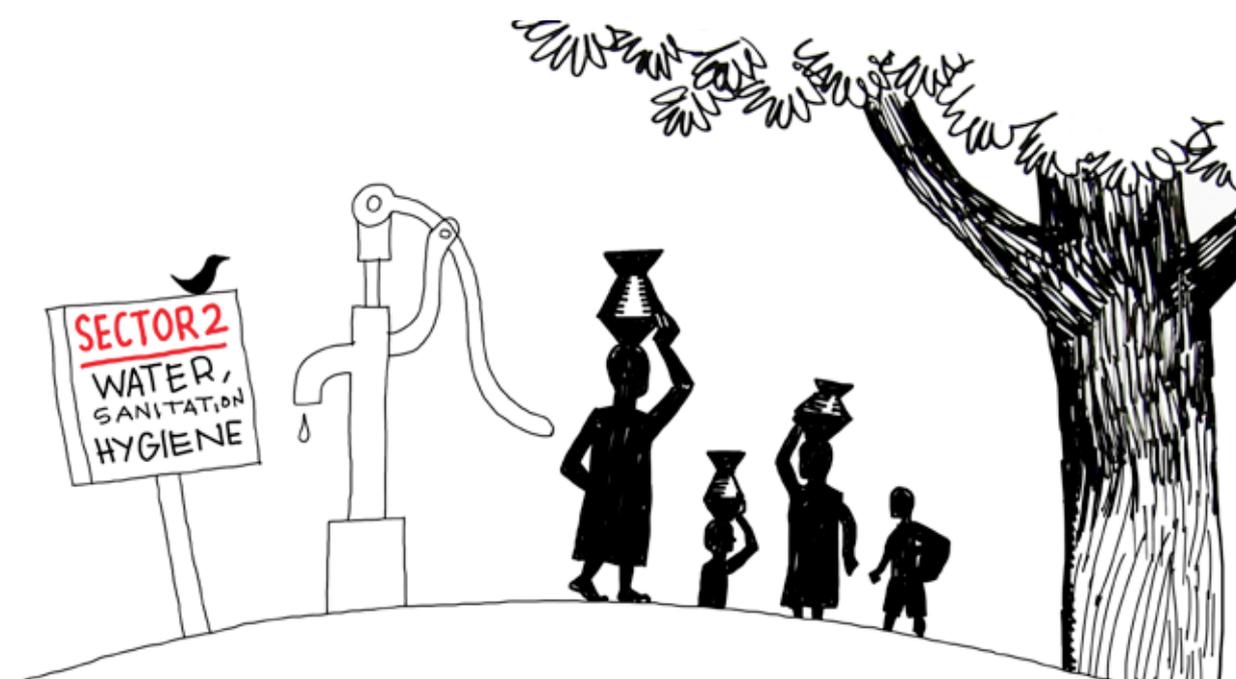
<sup>11</sup> | As of 2015, ZOA will start intensifying her work in urban settings, developing an approach that responds to the specific needs of the forcibly displaced population present there.

With respect to relief interventions, it can occur that these take place in areas where ZOA is not locally present and has no intention of starting a longer term programme there. In those cases, ZOA can still provide relief through national or international partners that have the capacity and a proven track record. When such partners are limited or even absent, ZOA can make its own disaster response capacity available. Even then, active collaboration with partners will be sought, so to maximize our impact in terms of scale and quality.

Besides these implementing and strategic **partnerships** that focus on deepening the work of ZOA, we also invest in creating occasional and strategic alliances that focus on complementarity. These alliances aim to (temporarily) combine the capacity and expertise of ZOA with that of the partner, in order to complement each other's work and provide a holistic response to the diverse range of needs of the people we serve. Moreover, we enter into partnerships to generate funds and to undertake education and awareness-raising efforts. We do so primarily in the Netherlands, both with (inter)national NGOs, as well as directly with our constituency.

As a Dutch civil society organisation, rooted in the Christian community in the Netherlands, we call upon our constituency and partners worldwide to take responsibility and become involved. ZOA has a loyal constituency that supports our work, among other through donations, prayer and time. However, we believe that being part of the Christian community also brings responsibilities for ZOA; namely the responsibility to be a voice for those we serve in fragile states to the people in the Netherlands. Promoting public awareness and increasing **involvement of our constituency** with the those we serve thus constitutes a crucial aspect of our overall approach.

A final characteristic of ZOA's approach is that we focus on **obtaining 'outcome results'**, or substantial change for our target group. By using our 'programmatic approach' and concentrating on specific geographical areas, we look beyond the immediate needs of the people we serve and focus on the underlying and root causes of their despair. In doing so we aim at realizing the specific programmatic objectives for each programme area in order to ensure a lasting impact. How this is brought about will be explained in that which follows.



## What our work involves

### Our goals

In essence, ZOA works to ensure positive change at community level by supporting women, men, girls and boys to realize dignified and resilient lives. To achieve that, we focus our attention on realizing the following specific goals:

- **Sustainable access to basic services and resources**
- **Good community governance**
- **Peaceful and stable communities**

#### **Sustainable access to basic services and resources**

One of the characteristics of countries affected by fragility is that authorities are not willing or able to provide adequate basic services and resources to its citizens. This may be due to various circumstances such as financial constraints, limited expertise and lack of information. However, services and resources such as water, education, health care, infrastructure, public security, a decent living environment, income, food, shelter and clothing are crucial for living dignified and resilient lives. Therefore, ZOA wants to support communities in attaining lasting access to these basic services and resources for all. Based on our experience and expertise, ZOA is aware that we cannot contribute to ensuring access to all basic services and resources. However, through the five sectors ZOA works in, and by using different implementation strategies, we believe that we can make a significant contribution. At the same time, our approach requires that we find partners to complement our efforts in the programme areas in which we work, so to ensure a holistic response.

#### **Good community governance**

States affected by fragility generally lack governance structures at all levels. Governance, and especially good governance is, however, essential in order to minimize corruption, ensure that the voices of all are heard in decision-making, and to hold decision-makers accountable. When supporting communities to realize dignified and resilient lives, ZOA strives to ensure good community governance through our work in the five sectors. By following our six guiding principles, we try to reach the entire community, especially the most vulnerable, and truly respond to the needs of all its members. However, ZOA plays a supporting role in these processes. In the end, in order to realize lasting change, efforts need to be driven by the community and its members themselves, by the (local) governments and by the other actors present. Good community governance<sup>12</sup> and the effective interaction between local civil society organisations, the local governments and the private sector is crucial in this respect.

#### **Peaceful and stable communities**

Violent conflicts deny people the opportunity to lead dignified and resilient lives. Social disintegration, scarcity of and unequal access to resources, gender inequality, tribal conflicts, cultural differences, and poverty can all lead to conflict. Peaceful and more stable communities can be achieved when people are able to resolve their conflicts without violence and are able to work together to improve their lives. To do so, it is crucial that underlying and root causes are tackled. Elements such as trust, safety, understanding, inclusion and equality are essential in that respect. Through our work in our five sectors, we address underlying and root causes and enable communities to resolve their conflicts without resorting to violence and so build peaceful and stable communities.

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12 | Good governance is the process in which the decision-making and implementation of decisions is realized according to the eight characteristics of 'good governance': participatory, consensus oriented, inclusive, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and following the rule of law. UNESCAP (2009), What is good governance, p. 1.

## Our sectors

ZOA is aware that, in order to achieve these three specific goals, a range of interventions in various sectors can be applied. To be effective and efficient, ZOA limits itself to five sectors. Over the past forty years ZOA has developed specific expertise and obtained extensive experience in these sectors within the context of conflict-affected fragility. We are, therefore, convinced that our strengths lie here and not in other, also highly relevant fields.

The sectors best suited to achieve the specific goals are decided based on a high quality context analysis, including a conflict analysis. However, with respect to ZOA's third goal, peaceful and stable communities, peacebuilding interventions, either stand-alone, or related to the other sectors, are always required. Moreover, to fulfil our dual mandate of relief and (early) recovery, a changing emphasis on the sectors we work in will be applied. Working on shelter interventions, for example, will probably be more fitting in relief interventions, while peacebuilding activities require a long term approach, more suitable for our (early) recovery programmes.



### Livelihoods and food security

Households seek various ways of generating income as a means for providing for their needs. That can be achieved through a diverse range of income-generating activities, either on- or off-farm. To succeed in their efforts, people require the appropriate resources (e.g. land, production materials and capital), skills and capacities, as well as favourable external conditions such as markets, infrastructure, links to value chains and appropriate rules and regulations.

ZOA attends these issues by focusing on four main areas:

- generation of income
- market support
- agricultural production, including livestock
- conditions for rural and urban economic development

When supporting communities in these aspects in either rural or urban areas, ZOA aims to optimally link them together, putting special emphasis on the sustainability of the interventions. With respect to agricultural production, for example, ZOA ensures that all interventions are designed so as to make optimal use of traditional and modern farm inputs, while safeguarding the quality of the soil and other natural resources.

With respect to the last area, ZOA considers that economic development interventions support and sustain the other three areas since they engage households and community organisations in economic processes. Doing so helps shift the mind-set from daily survival to economic recovery. For example, income generating activities frequently provide new skills, services and opportunities, thereby stimulating the local economy. Moreover, sound conditions for economic development, such as well-functioning government institutions, favourable regulations, vocational training opportunities, and infrastructure, make investments in the other three areas more rewarding.



### Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Safe water and basic sanitation are of primary importance for human survival and wellbeing. People need clean water and adequate levels of sanitation and hygiene to live healthy and dignified lives. At the same time, water and sanitation facilities are often public utilities, prone to social dynamics and even conflicts at community level. Sharing the available resources between different groups and between humans and livestock is just one example of that. Additionally, the sector is highly vulnerable to external factors such as climate change, environmental degradation, and desertification. Both these internal and external factors and the relevance of water, sanitation and hygiene create increasing tensions and pressure on available resources and on how these are used. ZOA looks for an integrated approach, that not only takes into account the needs of different stakeholders, but also the social, economic and ecological factors that play a role in the sector.



## Basic Education

ZOA believes that education is crucial to the realization of each of our three specific goals. Besides education being a basic need and right, literacy and numeracy are also important preconditions for community governance and economic development. Education brings adults and children of different backgrounds together and peace education can reduce conflicts. Education also contributes significantly to the work we do in the other sectors. We therefore focus on basic education, both formal and informal, which includes primary education, lower secondary education, functional adult literacy and numeracy, and vocational training. In doing so, ZOA supports interventions that ensure access to sufficient and sustainable resources for education, decrease retention, enable the active participation of communities in the planning and monitoring of education services, increase the willingness and capacity of local governments to take responsibility for education, and guarantee equal access to education for boys and girls.



## Peacebuilding

Peacebuilding interventions focus on securing peace. Peace is not only the absence of personal and direct violence, but also the presence of justice, social cohesion and mutual acceptance. These aspects require specific attention and will not come about automatically. Sustainable peace comes from within and cannot be forced from outside since it is very much related to issues such as tolerance, mutual trust and understanding, positive relations and hope. By applying a conflict transformation approach, ZOA aims to transform attitudes, behaviour and (local) causes of conflict, instead of only mitigating or resolving conflicts. We consider it important to address the key drivers of conflict, since changing the conflict dynamic is necessary for a community to be resilient and to disengage from wider conflicts.

In our (early) recovery programmes, our ambition goes beyond the principle of 'do no harm', since we truly want to contribute to more peaceful and just societies. Our relief programmes, however, will limit ambition to the 'do no harm'-approach. Their limited time frame (maximum of three years) and specific character does not always permit aiming at wider peacebuilding goals. Yet, the 'do no harm'-approach is very important during relief interventions, as the huge perceived needs and capital intensive actions may easily harm local social structures and fuel conflicts.



## Shelter

In situations where people need a roof over their heads, ZOA may engage in shelter support. This is often the case during emergencies, especially in the first six months. Through the provision of tents / tarpaulins or the upgrading of temporary camp facilities such as schools or churches, temples or mosques, ZOA tries to provide for more dignified living conditions. In the longer run, there is often a need for transitional shelter: a basic form of shelter that provides more protection from the elements, as well as privacy and safety. The design of these transitional shelters must be locally appropriate in terms of both materials used, and capacity to protect people. Where possible, ZOA also strives to make the design either re-usable or expandable, providing the possibility to turn transitional shelter into permanent housing over time. Apart from providing transitional shelter, ZOA may also provide assistance in repairs to permanent houses. In principle however, ZOA will not engage in the construction of new permanent housing.

## Cross-cutting issues

The men, women, boys and girls that we serve are confronted with a variety of common issues that go beyond specific sector areas of attention. These key matters of relevance to all sectors, the so called cross-cutting issues, are important in order to create an enabling environment for the work we do. They can provide bridges and links between the sectors and, therefore, need to be mainstreamed throughout the programmes. ZOA pays specific attention to two such issues: Gender and Disaster Risk Reduction. Both issues are vital to realization of dignified and resilient lives and to achieving the specific goals and programmatic results.

### Gender



Women, men, girls and boys are affected by, and respond to conflict and disaster in different ways. Moreover, women and girls carry a disproportionate burden when it comes to conflict and disaster and are amongst the most vulnerable. Systematic discrimination against women and girls is both a cause and a result of existing inequality in many countries affected by fragility. Therefore, equal rights and opportunities for both women and men in all areas of society and the economy are crucial if lasting change is to be achieved and dignified and resilient lives are to be realized. Both groups are in that respect an important part of the solutions needed. In our programmes, we aim to avoid reproducing discrimination on the grounds of gender and strive to promote equality between women and men and address specific gender-related needs. To do so, and to prevent reinforcement of existing inequalities, all ZOA programmes strive to mainstream gender equality throughout their life cycle and promote gender-sensitive interventions.

### Disaster Risk Reduction



In a time where conflicts and climate change are common threats, mainstreaming Disaster Risk Reduction in both relief and (early) recovery programmes is essential in order to safeguard results against future hazards and shock and strengthen individual's and communities' resilience to future disasters. Non-anticipated hazards, such as flooding and drought, can significantly undermine the sustainability of programmes and can return assisted populations into a state of extreme vulnerability. ZOA wants to avoid that by including preventive and mitigating measures into its programmes, especially in disaster responses, as well as working on disaster preparedness; develop capacities so communities, households and local governments can respond to a disaster and so minimize losses.

## Our implementation strategies

We will employ a diverse range of implementation strategies in setting up our programmes. These strategies are based on ZOA's strengths and on the challenges to be addressed. Depending on the context, needs and available resources, a combination of different implementation strategies can be applied in order to achieve the greatest impact.

ZOA employs the following implementation strategies:

- Capacity development
- Lobbying & advocacy
- Service delivery
- Analysis, research and innovation
- Awareness raising
- Dialogue and social integration
- Partnerships and cross sector links

## Why it works

Through decades of working side by side with communities in fragile contexts, ZOA has gained significant experience and expertise in supporting those affected by violent conflict and natural disasters. Along the way, we have learned certain lessons that have refined and improved our approach. However, at the same time the world around us is changing rapidly, forcing us to continuously rethink our approach, adjust and be flexible and innovative. Our core strengths are highly valuable assets in this respect and help us to approach our work in such a manner that we can ensure the highest quality for the people we serve and be a valuable and reliable partner for our supporters.

ZOA's strengths can be summarized as follows:

- Our hybrid decentralized organisational model through which we are locally present and have our own implementation capacity, yet provides opportunities to work through local partners.
- Our proven capacity to easily shift between relief and (early) recovery.
- Our highly committed and motivated international and national staff.
- Our professional set-up with solid and high quality operations and programmes, established through our programmatic approach.
- Our ability to constantly monitor and evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of our work through our internal Audit & Evaluation Department.
- Our reputation as a trusted and reliable partner that delivers.
- Our proven expertise to obtain results in the sectors in which we work in fragile contexts.
- Our solid knowledge of the context and culture of each of the areas in which we work.
- Our constant search for working in those areas where we can be of significant added value.
- Our long-lasting engagement with communities till such time that they can stand on their own feet.
- Our proven ability to develop capacities of a diverse range of actors.
- Our strong connection with, and support from our constituency in the Netherlands.

This Strategic Plan builds on our drives and values and core strengths and on the progress made thus far in order to contribute to fulfilling ZOA's vision. It sets out the priorities for ZOA for the period 2015 - 2018. As a shared agenda for all ZOA's offices, it will be used to guide resources, programmes and fundraising. At the same time, we understand that each of ZOA's programmes operate in a different context and are faced with varying challenges. The targets set forth below therefore provide for flexibility for each country office to focus on those areas that enable them to achieve the greatest impact for the people we serve in relation to their specific contexts.



## 3 | ZOA's programmatic targets: what we are going to do

### Programmatic focus

Over the past four years ZOA has further increased its sectoral expertise and experience in fragile contexts. That has made the organisation highly knowledgeable and skilled in effective ways to address the needs and desires of conflict-affected-people. In order to continue to be effective and efficient, and achieve our vision and mission, ZOA will continue to work within these sectors and build on its gained experiences and expertise. At the same time ZOA will, however, broaden the horizon within each of the sectors, by on the one hand concentrating more on the social aspects within each sector, and on the other focusing on relevant issues that originate in the complex global challenges the world faces today. This will reinforce ZOA's ability to provide more sustainable and tailor-made support to address the specific needs of the people we serve.

ZOA will place more emphasis on its peacebuilding efforts. In the previous Strategic Plan this sector was not mentioned as such. However, due to the heightened relevance of peacebuilding within the contexts in which ZOA works, we will increase our efforts on this. That also applies for our focus on economic development. Our work in urban areas will also receive more emphasis. To date ZOA has not been active in urban settings in a structured manner. We have had some experience in urban areas and it has now been decided that these events, together with external know-how and approaches, will be used to develop a specific ZOA approach to assist the forcibly displaced in these settings. Finally, ZOA will intensify its attention for its constituency. Education and awareness-raising on, and involvement of our constituency with the work of ZOA, the underlying causes of inequality and conflict, and the position and conditions of the people we serve, are central in this respect.

(New) emphasis will lie on the targets defined in the following. The targets are relevant for all ZOA countries, in different combinations and situations and with varying degrees of emphasis. In that respect, they are constructed thus that they can be tailored to apply to the local context of each of ZOA's programme areas. Objectives for 2018 have been formulated for each target. Based on the Strategic Plan, an operational plan will be developed which stipulates how these objectives for 2018 will be achieved year-by-year.



### Target 1 | Enhanced livelihoods and food security

While ZOA has increased the impact of its interventions in this sector during the past strategy period, we have also encountered many challenges. Among other these are related to the fragility of resources such as land and water, to climate change and to the increasing pressure on global public goods. Furthermore, conflict-induced circumstances such as movements of populations, violence, distrust and destroyed infrastructure increase the complexity of obtaining sustainable and resilient results. During the coming strategy period, specific attention will be devoted to these challenges to help more people, especially the most vulnerable, to have enhanced sustainable and resilient livelihoods and enjoy greater food security.

### Objectives for 2018

- Achieve that ZOA's livelihood and food security interventions are specifically geared to the needs, constraints and opportunities of the most vulnerable and marginalized groups.
- Ensure that results of interventions are sustainable through the use of specific sustainability criteria and indicators.
- Create conditions whereby rural and urban economic development can be facilitated, with a special focus on vocational training and adult literacy interventions.
- Help more households to increase their resilience in the face of conflict and disasters.
- Ensure that strong lobby and advocacy initiatives are implemented that focus on land tenure systems and ensuring land rights for the people we serve.
- Aid local governments to have increase capacities to take on their roles and responsibilities within the sector.



## Target 2 | Sustainable access to adequate water and sanitation, and improved hygiene practices

The social dynamics present in the sector, as well as the complex global challenges both have a significant impact on this sector, therefore calling for an integrated approach. Such an approach does not only take into account the needs of different stakeholders, but also the social, economic and ecological factors that play a role in the sector. ZOA already initiated such an integrated approach during the past strategy period. However, we continue to feel that we can improve on it, so to better respond to the needs of the people we serve. By building on the significant progress that has been achieved thus far, ZOA will increase its efforts to further ensure improvements in the sustainability of its interventions by perfecting our integrated approach. During the upcoming strategy period, ZOA will strive to ensure that more people who live in fragile contexts, especially women and girls, will have increased sustainable access to safe water and decent sanitation, and apply adequate hygiene practices.

### Objectives for 2018

- Expand on implementation of a proven integrated approach regarding water, sanitation and hygiene.
- Share experiences with water shed level interventions in at least 3 different countries.
- Ensure that more people, especially women and girls, are provided with sustainable, sufficient and safe drinking water.
- Promote that more people, especially women and girls, are motivated to stop open defecation and to construct sustainable, sufficient and dignified sanitation facilities by using Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS).
- Educate more people, especially women and girls, to apply simple and adequate hygiene practices.
- Aid more communities to strengthened their resilience with respect to water, sanitation and hygiene.
- Support local governments to increase capacities to take on their roles and responsibilities within the sector and provide for the public services.



## Target 3 | Increased transformation of community level conflicts

With ZOA's prime focus on 'conflict- affected fragility' countries, and considering the fact that (violent) conflicts can seriously undermine people's opportunities to realize dignified and resilient lives, there is significant relevance for ZOA to increase its attention on conflict transformation and peacebuilding. We do this primarily at community level. However, since communities do not exist in isolation and many conflicts have sources and solutions outside the community, ZOA can also be active at higher levels when needed, so to work towards the desired results.

It is our aim to tackle the underlying and root causes of conflicts at community level by transforming attitudes, behaviour and (local) causes of conflict. Instead of only mitigating or resolving conflicts, we support communities in preventing new conflicts from occurring. Conditions such as trust, safety, understanding, inclusion, wellbeing and equality are crucial in this respect. The same is true for the active inclusion of vulnerable and marginalized groups. We feel that although ZOA has highly valuable experiences in the area, obtained through active work on peace related issues, we can still improve our approach significantly. Placing peacebuilding strategically as a sector and including peaceful and stable communities as a specific goal will contribute to that. ZOA will strive to have assisted more communities by 2018 in transforming conflicts based on a solid and proven peacebuilding approach.

### Objectives for 2018

- Promote that a proven peacebuilding approach at community level is being used successfully.
- Ensure that regular updated conflict analysis and conflict sensitive monitoring and evaluation is realised in all programmes.
- Introduce more capacities developed at the community level to mitigate and resolve internal and external conflicts.
- Fully utilize potential of formal and non-formal education for conflict transformation processes.
- Strive to achieve that community conflicts that have their root causes originating at higher levels are brought to the attention of relevant stakeholders at district, national and international levels, either directly or through partner organisations.
- Increase collaboration and learning between ZOA and other peacebuilding expert organisations at different levels.

## **Target 4 | Be active in urban settings**

Increasing numbers of the world's forcibly displaced population reside in urban settings nowadays. Distinguishing them from the wider urban population can, however, be difficult, making it rather challenging to assist refugees and IDPs. In order to develop specific urban programmes, ZOA needs to understand the mix of needs and capacities and take into account the specific problems related to the forced displacement of the people we serve. The tendency of displaced people to live with host families, their need to deal with specific problems such as loss of family members, livelihood sources and assets, traumatic experiences, discrimination and continued risk of persecution are just some of specific challenges they face. At the same time, the burden on host communities should also be taken into account when developing programmes as this can cause rising tensions and conflict. In general, the urban context, with its high population density, creates potential for new conflicts and disasters, with a potentially more devastating impact.

Witnessing the rising needs of conflict-affected people in urban settings, ZOA believes that it can put its long-standing experience in working with refugees, IDPs and host communities to use for this group. ZOA strives to set up a well-functioning and impactful approach for urban refugees, IDPs and host communities that takes into account their specific needs and circumstances, and at the same time builds on ZOA's strengths and sectors in order to support this group and make their voice heard.

### **Objectives for 2018**

- Develop and introduce an adequate and sustainable approach to assist forcibly displaced people residing in urban settings .
- Help refugees, IDPs, returnees and host communities in urban settings to deal with their needs and challenges through interventions within the ZOA sectors.
- Achieve that marginalized groups are actively involved in ZOA's sectoral interventions in urban settings.
- Endeavour to promote that the situation of refugees, IDPs, returnees and host communities in urban settings are voiced at relevant governmental, institutional level, nationally and internationally.



## **Target 5 | Expanded assistance in emergencies**

ZOA's disaster response programmes focus on reducing the length and depth of a disaster or crisis. We do so, on the one hand by providing rapid humanitarian relief, and on the other through slightly longer term reparations or replacements of what was damaged, and protection of what people still have. By using our experience and expertise in the sectors in which ZOA works, we implement either directly, through partners, or through a mix of these two. Moreover, ZOA's cross-cutting issues play an important role in our disaster response programmes. Where possible, our programmes build on, and work with existing social structures. We look for socially and culturally appropriate responses, making it feasible to do much of our procurement locally . Finally, in order to avoid duplication and help those most in need, ZOA actively engages in coordination mechanisms with authorities and humanitarian agencies. Our aim is to protect the people we serve from destitution, and place them in the best possible position to regain their normal life. This will prevent further dependence on aid, and will support people's self-esteem and dignity.

In the current context of rising number of crises, either by natural or human-made disasters, emergency response is becoming more pressing. Our long-term presence in many of the world's most vulnerable places, and our flexible Disaster Response Unit based in the Netherlands means that ZOA has the ability to respond to a crisis quickly. This capacity of ZOA is something we want to expand upon, as well as strengthen our position as an effective and reliable emergency relief organisation.

### **Objectives for 2018**

- Work towards enhanced rapid response in crises, especially in those countries where ZOA is already present.
- Be a well-positioned and recognized implementing partner for humanitarian relief programmes, both in the Netherlands and internationally.
- Increase disaster response capacity of ZOA NL and the ZOA country offices.
- Work on a strengthened and well positioned approach on providing longer term and sustainable humanitarian support.



## Target 6 | Increased constituency involvement

As a civil society organisation, ZOA is rooted in the Dutch Christian community. Being part of this community is very important to ZOA. Our relationship with our constituency provides us with support such as donations, prayer and voluntary work. At the same time, this relationship is also accompanied by important responsibilities on our side, namely the responsibility to be a voice of those we serve in fragile states to the people in the Netherlands. Promoting education and public awareness on the work of ZOA, the underlying causes of inequality and conflict, and on the far-reaching effects of people's daily choices here in the Netherlands on the lives of people in other parts of the world, are expressions of this. Since we consider education and awareness-raising in the Netherlands to be an important part of our work, we will strengthen our approach in order to increase the involvement of our constituency with the work of ZOA and the challenges faced by our target group. By establishing interaction between both groups, we can build bridges between them. In this regard, during the strategy period 2015-2018, ZOA strives to facilitate an ongoing and sustainable connection between our constituency and the people who are affected because of violent conflict or natural disasters.

### Objectives for 2018

- Encourage more members of ZOA's constituency to be (actively) involved in the work of ZOA
- Raise awareness among more members of ZOA's constituency regarding the challenges faced by ZOA's target groups
- Make members of ZOA's constituency more aware of the influence of their behaviour on the lives of ZOA's target group.
- Ensure that ZOA offers its constituency specific and appropriate means to get involved.



## 4 | ZOA's organisational targets: how we are going to do it

### Introduction

The world is rapidly going through an unprecedented transition. To remain effective and efficient in this dynamic world, realize our vision, and deliver the programmatic targets set forth in the previous chapter, we feel that we must focus on those issues within our internal organisation that build on our strengths, and at the same time address our weaknesses. However, we must also be realistic in our ambitions as a medium-sized organisation. The organisational targets outlined below focus on becoming a more knowledge-driven, innovative, open and accountable organisation that provides high quality support and guarantees effective and efficient operations.



### Target 1 | Improved programme quality

Although ZOA has significantly strengthened its programmatic approach in the previous strategy period and established an internal audit and evaluation set-up, we are not as skilled and agile in applying all policies and procedures, and complying with all processes and structures as we would like. We therefore consider it important to improve this aspect in order to increase the quality and impact of our work and that of our partners. By continuing to apply our programmatic approach and investing in improving it, by streamlining our policies and procedures, and becoming a better learning organisation – one that consistently monitors and evaluates its work, openly shares knowledge and information, and facilitates and uses innovation – ZOA can continue to improve its programme quality.

ZOA believes that in order to improve its programme quality, our work needs to be of considerable volume. Although ZOA's total turnover may decrease, we want to ensure an economy of scale in the countries in which we work. We consider that at least the current size of ZOA's operations is needed in order to ensure the support required to fulfil our mission and vision, be significant and have added value in the countries and sectors ZOA works in.

### Objectives for 2018

- Achieve that ZOA's programmatic approach is used optimally in each of the (early) recovery programme areas.
- Set up strong result-based management throughout the organisation, including integrated monitoring, evaluation and learning.
- Ensure that ZOA's organisational culture and staff capabilities are aligned with the internal structures, processes and standards.
- Promote increased (sectoral) expertise and staff capacities, especially in the field, including strengthened capacity to perform high quality context analysis.
- implement fully functioning information & knowledge management that stimulates continuous learning, innovation and cross-fertilization, increases synergy and coherence, and enhances the speed and ease with which knowledge and expertise can pass in and out of the organisation.
- Provide increased piloting and sharing of new and innovative approaches.



## Target 2 | Flexible internal governance structure

The hybrid decentralized organisational model of ZOA is considered a strength of the organisation. It gives ZOA the necessary flexibility and responsiveness to carry out effective and efficient programmes, either directly or through local partners, to search for the necessary funds to finance specific programmes, and to build local capacities and alliances. At the same time, the constantly changing external (financial) context in which ZOA operates requires ZOA to become more flexible in its set up and act in a more articulated manner. By 2018, ZOA's ambition is to work in a more coherent and integrated fashion with an increasingly flexible, but reduced core and an adjustable shell.

### Objectives for 2018

- Simplified and clear (administrative) policies and procedures that are accessible and understandable for all.
- increased synergy, coherence and exchange between the ZOA offices.
- More flexibly employable staff that can be deployed quickly when needed, especially in case of a disaster response (rosters).
- Clearly defined and understood roles and responsibilities of staff and offices put in practice.
- Be more open and transparent, and use increased (horizontal and vertical) communication and interaction throughout the organisation.



## Target 3 | Strengthened transparency and accountability

ZOA believes that showing what we do and how we do it, and demonstrating that we do as we promise is a crucial aspect of our work. By being transparent and accountable we can build more effective and long lasting relationships, increase the ownership of the communities we work with and improve our impact. Accountability, both externally to those we serve and to our supporters, as well as internally towards our staff, forms part of what ZOA stands for. We are committed to be held accountable and to be open to seek external input that will help us improve our work. This is not only reflected by the fact that ZOA commits to the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) and works towards application of the CHS, but goes much deeper in that it is an essential element of our key values. Moreover, we consider demonstrating transparency by providing insights into our financial and programmatic approach and our results to be a sign of respect to the people we serve and to those who support us (financially). However, while highly desired and crucial in achieving our mission and vision, a fully vested culture of mutual accountability and transparency within the organisation has not been achieved yet. Therefore, ZOA commits to establish an embedded culture of mutual accountability and transparency throughout the organisation by 2018, both towards internal and external stakeholders.

### Objectives for 2018

- Demonstrate reliability and honesty by using appropriate and innovative communication tools for a diverse audience that offer narrative and financial information, give insights into our operations, show our impact and allows for user-friendly complaints mechanisms.
- Ensure that internal checks and balances are in place throughout the whole organisation which are known to and adhered to by all staff.
- Strengthen the prominent position of the people we serve in our work to ensure appropriate and relevant interventions, inclusive participation, ownership and the prevention of negative effects.
- Make sure that sound financial management is adhered to by our implementing and strategic partners.
- Put in place a continuous learning cycle which allows for learning from experiences, innovation and implementing of changes to improve outcomes for those we serve and achieve cost-effectiveness.



## Target 4 | Investing in people

ZOA considers its staff and volunteers to be one of its most important assets. They deliver the work, often under adverse circumstances, and so ensure that ZOA can fulfil its mission and vision. ZOA, therefore, wants to value, understand and inspire its people and provide them with professional development opportunities. However, due to fast changing circumstances and demands, and pressure on financial resources, attention to and developments in this field have not kept pace with the needs and desires of both staff and the organisation. An alignment of organisational culture, leadership focus, staff capabilities and competencies, and the internal structure and processes are crucial in this respect. By 2018, ZOA wants to be an agile, entrepreneurial and flexible organisation with skilled and motivated staff and volunteers that are able to respond, with passion and quality, to the needs of the those we serve and to the needs of the organisation.

### Objectives for 2018

- Attract, retain and develop (young) staff with the required skills and capacities to achieve ZOA's mission and vision, by using pro-active, appropriate and attractive methods.
- Ensure that talents are identified and nurtured within the organisation, including through opportunities for horizontal and vertical mobilization and appropriate staff development.
- Promote that ZOA's corporate culture and brand values are propagated by all staff members.
- Achieve Increased (sectoral) expertise and capacity of staff, especially in the field.
- Realize enhanced staff diversity throughout the organisation, especially for senior positions.
- Take stronger measures to decrease staff vulnerability with respect to insecurity, and promote business continuity.



## Target 5: | Funding our ambitions

The external context in which the organisation finds itself necessitates that ZOA be ambitious in its work. At the same time, however, the changing funding landscape makes it increasingly challenging to find the financial resources to fund our ambitions. Moreover, demands of both private and institutional donors are changing, requiring more from organisations like ZOA. To be able to fulfil our ambitions in an ever more competitive market, increased investments are required. This calls on ZOA to become even more cost-effective, and focus increasingly on fundraising and on finding innovative finance instruments and models. In the upcoming years, ZOA will do its utmost to find the right financial balance in order to fulfil the organisation's ambitions as established in this plan, and so realize our vision and contribute to our mission.

### objectives for 2018

- Have an attractive and innovative fundraising strategy in place that allows for a well-balanced diversification of private<sup>13</sup>, corporate and institutional funding.
- Have an adequate and explainable balance between restricted and unrestricted funds in order to finance preconditions that ensure quality, effectiveness and efficiency.
- Be a leaner and more cost effective and sustainable organisation, among other by changing how we work, make better use of the opportunities donors provide when budgeting, and increasingly making use of economy of scale.
- Ensure that innovative financing instruments and business models are successfully investigated by ZOA and at least two are applied.
- Realize increased resources raised for ZOA's disaster responses.

13 | Private funding includes income from own fundraising activities among private donors and third party campaigns.



## Target 6 | Connecting with others

The changing global landscape and rapid dynamics that are present in the sector mean that an active engagement with the outside is highly important. As ZOA we cannot, and do not want to achieve the targets presented in this Strategic Plan on our own. We greatly value our constituency, donors, implementing and strategic partners<sup>14</sup>, and other public and private stakeholders that support us. Both in the field, and in The Netherlands and worldwide, we consider partnerships and coordination essential elements of our work. For 2018, we, therefore, aim to have increased our connections with new and existing supporters, either in the Netherlands or abroad, based on a shared vision, identity, and complementarity.

### Objectives for 2018

- Clarity on the two strategic partnerships with which ZOA wants to increase its collaboration on the long(er) run for fund- and awareness-raising and / or programme implementation.
- Increased and deeper collaboration with new and existing public and private partners at a national, European and international level based on a common vision, identity and / or complementarity.
- Broadening of the ZOA brand at an international level based on a 'brand expansion plan'.
- Have at least two corporates<sup>15</sup> implement (part of) their corporate social responsibility actions through ZOA.
- Be considered as a reliable and attractive partner for donors, corporates and other (I)NGOs, especially with respect to humanitarian relief programmes.
- Strengthened relationship with our constituency.



14 | Implementing partnerships are short(er) term and mostly project based partners, while strategic partnerships are more formal alliances between ZOA and a partner, established for longer term periods and at programme or organisational level.

15 | ZOA understands 'corporates' to mean both corporate enterprises and corporate foundations.



We provide **RELIEF** to people affected by conflict or natural disasters | We contribute to a new perspective of **HOPE** in which people work together for a promising future in dignity and mutual trust | Together with the affected communities we work on the **RECOVERY** of their livelihoods

For a 3.5 minute animation video of our Strategic Plan and for the full Strategic Plan, check our website.

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