



Organizational Plan

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1 Scope

The governing Board of Directors of Verbree International (VI) developed and approved this Organizational Plan to serve as an official guide for current and future VI operations. It will be reviewed periodically and updated as necessary under the discretion of the Board of Directors and is therefore considered a "living document".

2 Introduction and Background

VI is a non-profit 501(c)(3) public charity organized within the State of Michigan, U.S.A. and registered with the states of Michigan and New York.

VI's primary purpose, as indicated in its Articles of Incorporation, is to receive and administer funds for the charitable purpose of aiding the impoverished by promoting sustainable livelihoods, teaching ways to cope with changing conditions, and instilling hope, principally through grassroots development in third-world countries.

VI's secondary purpose is to improve awareness of the situations of the impoverished around the world and to create relationships between those of differing socio-economic and cultural backgrounds.

These purposes constitute VI's "exempt purpose" which the U.S. Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and state authorities use to determine whether an organization can be granted tax exempt status. VI fulfills its exempt purpose through its operations and projects as set forth in this Organizational Plan together with specific project proposals.

David and Cheryl Verbree founded VI in June 2004 in response to God's direct call to carry out a Christian life of love and service. During their previous development work in Afghanistan and Zambia, the Verbrees saw first hand the particular needs of the impoverished. They believe that Jesus calls all people to care for the downtrodden and those lacking hope, to work along side them, and to serve them in His Name.

3 Organizational Principles

The following section contains a brief summary of the mission, values, and strategies of VI.

3.1 *Mission Statement*

Loving and serving the impoverished by promoting sustainable livelihoods, diversifying coping mechanisms, thereby instilling hope.

3.2 *Values*

VI is an organization that operates under the principles of love and service to others. As loving and serving others are a part of following Christ, VI operates under Christian principles. However, VI does not require adherence to Christianity in order to work for or be involved in the organization. Potential staff and board members are only required to conform with VI's Organizational and Operational Principles as set forth in this document.

As an organization, VI values:

- Loving and serving others. We believe God calls us to go out into the world and serve one another through brotherly love.
- Respecting people and upholding their dignity, including their beliefs and culture. We believe God calls us to view all people as made in the image of God and therefore inherently worthy of respect.
- Relationships between supporters, field workers, and beneficiaries. We believe that working with the impoverished and establishing real relationships produces genuine encouragement and hope.
- Sustainability. We believe that making a lasting difference for the impoverished involves sustainable solutions and not just quick fixes.
- Communal Knowledge. We believe that communal knowledge is valuable for development work. We will seek to encourage the sharing of knowledge as much as possible.

3.3 Strategies

3.3.1 Grass-roots Development

We believe that development is most effective when it includes a “grass-roots” component. “Grass-roots” denotes operation at a local level. Thus, grass-roots development encourages local participation and decision-making. It is a bottom-up approach that requires few inputs and helps local communities decide what they value and what is best for them.

3.3.2 Sustainable Projects

We believe that development must be sustainable. By this, we mean that projects should be self-sustaining for the people that they help. Our goal is to be involved with projects that work on a long term basis, using local resources and abilities to implement solutions that last. Continuous, sustainable projects allow impoverished families to restore lost assets and deal with emergencies and unexpected disruptions to their primary source of income.

3.3.3 Maintaining Relationships

As being in a state of poverty is a tenuous existence, the impoverished tend to rely heavily on a social network for support. Thus, it is essential and necessary for them to maintain relationships within the community. We believe that development projects should account for these relationships and the unique context of the particular community being helped. Any solutions to what Westerners would call “technical” problems should take into account the social, cultural, economic, and religious context.

3.3.4 Technical Knowledge

We seek to incorporate science and research components into development. We believe that science can and should be made practical for use by all people including those generally lacking an understanding of that science. We aim to give opportunities to scientists and researchers to use their skills in helping the impoverished gain scientific understanding. We strive for the transfer of technical knowledge from researcher to field staff and then from field staff to beneficiary.

3.3.5 Use of Demonstration

VI will seek to learn from the people their current techniques and methods for earning a living. They will then use demonstration, as it is the best learning strategy for people with little formal schooling, to teach methods that could improve their current practices. Demonstration allows VI to assume the risk of trying methods that are new to a given location before asking others to take on that risk. Then, there is no need for convincing people of the benefits; they see it for themselves.

4 Operational Principles

VI operates according to certain principles as summarized in the following section.

4.1 Declaration of Faith

VI is based on Christian morals and faith. By this we mean that we love and serve others because: 1) We are called to; 2) We sincerely desire to empower the impoverished; and, 3) We bring glory to God by doing so. Evangelism is not our motivation; however, staff and board members are permitted to share openly and honestly their beliefs.

4.2 Participation For All

VI is an interfaith organization; however, we seek to be clear in that we do grass-roots development work only. We welcome anyone of any denomination or faith who seeks to support this kind of development.

Participation in our projects is not dependent on a person's faith. As Christ has called us to love and serve all people, so our work will not discriminate between Christians and non-Christians.

4.3 Dignity of Human Life

God calls us to respect human life as individually worthy of dignity. We seek to treat everyone we serve with love and respect as if we were loving and serving God, and we will strive to maintain the dignity of the impoverished when presenting information about them to the public.

4.4 Sources of Funding

VI will solicit donations from individuals and organizations that care about the impoverished and want to help. VI does not solicit funds from the government except for the purpose of research. The U.S. and other 1st world countries have aid programs that use tax dollars to run large development projects around the world. While these programs do much good, political agendas and purposes always seem to determine where the tax dollars and efforts go.

4.5 Decentralized Network

VI is a non-bureaucratic, decentralized entity created for the purpose of supporting and doing development work. Maintaining such a network of people generally requires little administrative cost; however, being aware of the danger of too little supervision, VI will not split its resources to the point of losing its effectiveness. Real work will be accomplished as cooperation, not separation, characterizes its daily operation.

This type of decentralization is an achievable goal in today's world with its greater communication capabilities. We envision being able to use internet and email technology to relay important information about each project including project proposals, comments and discussions, project status reports, measurements of project success, and project summary reports. VI will also be able to help field staff connect with each other through the VI website for communication of struggles, subsequent discussions of solutions, and mutual encouragement and support.

In addition, VI seeks to bring together people and ideas in an honest, open way with financial and organizational transparency. Supporters of VI will know with certainty where their support is going. This will provide accountability for field staff to their supporters.

5 Program Description

5.1 Problem Analysis

The impoverished served by VI reside primarily in underdeveloped countries and typically have few abilities or assets to cope with changing conditions. Those who usually depend on a single source of income based on one type of skill (e.g., farming) are unable to cope with emergencies or disruptions to their primary means of income. Lacking the necessary skills to develop other livelihoods during difficult times, their only options are to sell assets, work in another country (out-labor), receive humanitarian aid, or beg. These sources can initially provide money for income, but are ultimately unsustainable over time. As income and assets are exhausted, people fall into poverty and despair with little hope of achieving an acceptable quality of life.

Having served in other countries as development workers, the founders of VI have witnessed the problems and needs of the impoverished. Having seen the loss of assets and debt incurred from five years of drought and many years of war in Afghanistan and the lack of assets in rural villages in Zambia and Burkina Faso, they recognize how fragile subsistence living is and the lack of options currently available to the impoverished to cope with their diminished circumstances.

5.2 Goals

5.2.1 Promote Sustainable Livelihoods for the Impoverished

VI will strengthen the livelihoods of the impoverished by promoting sustainable methods of generating income. VI will encourage the use of local resources as much as possible while augmenting people's existing knowledge with new techniques and research results.

5.2.2 Help Diversify Coping Mechanisms

VI will demonstrate and teach new skills to restore lost assets and diversify sources of income so that the impoverished can cope with changing conditions. This will involve helping people develop their own ways to cope and generate new sources of income without jeopardizing their current means of survival.

5.2.3 Instill Hope

The successes of achieving sustainable livelihoods and alternative coping mechanisms can generate hope. VI will stay the length of time it requires to see them through adversity for maintaining this hope.

5.3 Objectives and Activities

Field staff propose specific projects in the regions where they operate. Objectives and activities to achieve program goals are developed for each project as the types of techniques and skills specifically demonstrated and taught are dependent upon each beneficiary's abilities, resources, and desires.

VI's first project involves the mobilization of two field workers to Burkina Faso, West Africa and the establishment of a demonstration farm in the rural north for agricultural research and development of future projects.

5.4 Future Plans

Although VI is designed to be flexible in its operation and able to accommodate various projects and locations, VI has several long term goals:

- In 1-3 years, establish demonstration farm staffed by 2 expatriate field staff, 2 expatriate interns, and 4 local staff in Burkina Faso
- In 3-5 years, expand activities to include new projects
- In 5-7 years, expand demonstration farm to training center, hire additional local staff as necessary, expand to new locations in Burkina Faso
- In 7-10 years, expand operations to neighboring countries in dryland areas of West Africa

5.5 User Projections

In the field, VI will establish itself in or near a location of known poverty. We anticipate that people will inquire about our activities. Hearing about our mission and plans, people will likely tell family, friends, and neighbors, thus spreading the word about the opportunities to participate in our projects. We anticipate farmers coming to us when they see demonstration of real improvements.

We want to maintain relationships with all in the area. We do not wish to force our techniques on anyone, but will aim to have farmers volunteer and want to work with us.

We estimate that our demonstration farm in its first year of operation will serve 10-15 interested farmers who may choose to work with us or try something new on their farm with our help. In successive years, the number of farmers we offer technical support to on a per-case basis may increase, although we aim to work with a core group of 10-15 farmers per full-time staff member. In the future, a training center will have room to accommodate small groups of farmers led by an extension worker.

5.6 Partnerships

We seek partnerships both within the U.S. and abroad. We seek technical partnerships to carry out our mission and network our resources. These may include:

- Educational institutions for obtaining research material and providing research opportunities/internships
- Non-profit organizations that specialize in the areas we are working in for technical assistance
- Churches for financial and spiritual support
- Other private organizations and foundations for both financial and technical support

We wish to establish the following relationships within the countries we work:

- Government agencies for approval and to ensure agreement between the country's developmental goals and strategies and the goals and strategies of VI.
- Non-governmental organizations for sharing assessment data and technical assistance and jointly cooperating for common goals
- Local authorities for approval, security, and for obtaining land-rights

5.7 Self-Assessment and Program Evaluation

VI will continually monitor and evaluate its performance in attaining its goals and adhering to its mission both in the field and in the U.S. In the field, each project has specific goals, objectives, indicators, timetable, and budget. Field staff report these to the Executive Director on a monthly basis. The Executive Director monitors the progress of all projects and continually works to improve the organization's performance. VI conducts periodic auditing of projects by visiting VI board members, officers, and/or qualified third parties.

The Board of Directors of VI similarly monitors activities at the regional offices. The Board of Directors specifically monitors finances and fund raising, supporter relations, public awareness, and the efficiency of the regional offices.

5.8 Risk Assessments

VI will continuously identify risks that could affect either the organization as a whole or an individual project. Risks will be recorded, analyzed, evaluated, and assigned a level of severity for each consequence as well as an estimated probability of occurrence. VI will attempt to avoid or mitigate any risk that has an unacceptably high severity of consequence.

VI will re-evaluate all risks at the following times:

- At the acceptance of a project proposal by the Board of Directors
- At the completion of a project
- Periodically as determined by the Board of Directors
- At the end of each fiscal year

6 Administration

6.1 Board of Directors

6.1.1 General

VI is governed by a Board of Directors (the "Board"). Although not usually involved in day-to-day activities, it is responsible for managing the organization and making key decisions. The Board is responsible for guiding the overall planning and strategy of VI, adding or removing board members, setting policy, authorizing programs, projects, and significant financial transactions, hiring or firing staff with the approval of the Executive Director, engaging auditors and other professional services, and monitoring fund raising activities.

A board member has legal duties to carry out. The duty of care involves participating regularly in board meetings and ensuring that all organizational policies and procedures are followed. The duty of loyalty means that each board member must act in the interest of the organization. Board members must sign a Conflict of Interest Policy where they agree to disclose all potential conflicts of interests. The duty of obedience includes ensuring that the organization adheres to all applicable laws and its stated purpose.

The further responsibilities, duties, and rules for board members are described in the Bylaws of VI. The specific duties of each Officer of the Board including the Board President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Director of Public Relations are included in these Bylaws.

6.1.2 Review Procedures

The Board approves VI policies and procedures after a formal review stage in which board members ask questions and comment about the document. When a consensus is reached regarding the content and wording of the document, the Board formally votes to approve it. The Board reviews current VI policies and procedures on a periodic basis in order to update them for any new issues.

6.1.3 New Board Members

VI is always seeking people who believe in its mission and are willing to serve on its Board. New board members receive a Board Manual which includes all pertinent information about the organization and its policies and procedures. Current board members are responsible for the training of new board members and will use the Board Manual as an orientation and resource tool. Also, those board members leaving a board position will train their replacement.

6.2 Personnel

6.2.1 Organizational Hierarchy

Appendix I shows the organizational hierarchy of VI.

6.2.2 Officers

The Executive Director has responsibility for the day-to-day operation of VI ensuring that it is accomplishing its mission, goals, and objectives and adhering to its approved procedures and policies. The Executive Director reports directly to the Board. As VI is a decentralized organization, the Executive Director may or may not be based in the field.

Under the Executive Director are several officers including the Director of Education, and one or more Project Manager(s). The Director of Education oversees and establishes a curriculum for all interns, is responsible for training all new staff members and extension workers, and aids Project Managers in establishing training programs and capacity building for beneficiaries. Project Managers are responsible for running an assigned project, proposing and maintaining project budgets, and reporting project status to the Executive Director.

6.2.3 Field and Office Staff

Staff will perform work and tasks as specified in the approved proposal, budget, and time line of the project to which they are assigned under the direction of a Project Manager.

VI staff consists of employees, volunteers, and interns. All staff receive per diems to cover lodging, food, and incidentals as well as limited reimbursements for medical insurance premiums while they are in the field. Employees receive either hourly wages or a salary while they are within the U.S. However, employees may receive a living stipend while they are in the field. Employees may also receive other benefits such as 401(k) and pension depending on VI's funding situation.

Staff and/or volunteers operating at regional offices in the U.S. will maintain a website to link supporters, field staff, and beneficiaries for the purpose of disseminating information, receiving financial support, discussing project challenges, and facilitating general communications. Depending on the availability of funds, additional staff may be hired to work for the organization in this capacity.

6.2.4 Staff Training

VI provides in-house staff training facilitated through the Director of Education to ensure that project procedures are properly understood and followed in the course of implementation. Staff and volunteers receive the VI Employee Handbook and other applicable policies. VI expects staff and volunteers to adhere to the rules, policies, and procedures set forth by the organization.

VI also provides field staff with language, cultural, technical, and project management training as necessary to prepare them for project work.

6.3 Regional Offices

VI is registered in both Michigan and New York. Regional offices, initially staffed by volunteers, will be established in both locations to facilitate awareness, fund raising, special events, dissemination of information, and general communications between supporters, field staff, and beneficiaries.

6.4 Project Cycle

VI is a project-driven organization. Project proposals and budgets are controlling documents. These, in conjunction with the Organizational Plan and Bylaws, are the standards under which VI operates to accomplish its exempt purpose and protect its status as a tax-exempt non-profit organization.

Each project has its own purpose as set forth in its individual proposal and must adhere to its own budget. If projects share administrative resources, facilities, or staff, costs are proportionately distributed to each project budget.

Field staff submit written project proposals that include the following items:

- Goal – a one sentence statement describing how the project seeks to further the exempt purpose of VI
- Objectives – one or more statements describing what VI intends to achieve by the project
- Activities – a list of specific activities that VI will do in order to achieve each objective
- Indicators (Milestones) – items that VI measures periodically throughout a project to determine progress toward each objective
- Timeline – a proposed schedule of when certain project activities are anticipated to be complete
- Budget – proposed costs of all project activities

As a public charity, VI has the responsibility of dispensing funds in accordance with its exempt purpose. For this reason, project proposals must go through several steps to ensure that VI uses funds responsibly for the purpose for which they were given. These steps are as follows:

1. Initial proposal – Field staff conduct needs assessments with the input of beneficiaries and gather suggestions from supporters. After careful analysis, they create project proposals with budgets that closely reflect local costs.
2. Initial approval and revisions – Field staff send the proposal and budget to the Executive Director and other officers for initial approval. Modifications are made as necessary.
3. Final approval – The Executive Director sends the proposal and budget to the Board for final approval. Once approved, the proposal and budget are placed on our website for general viewing.

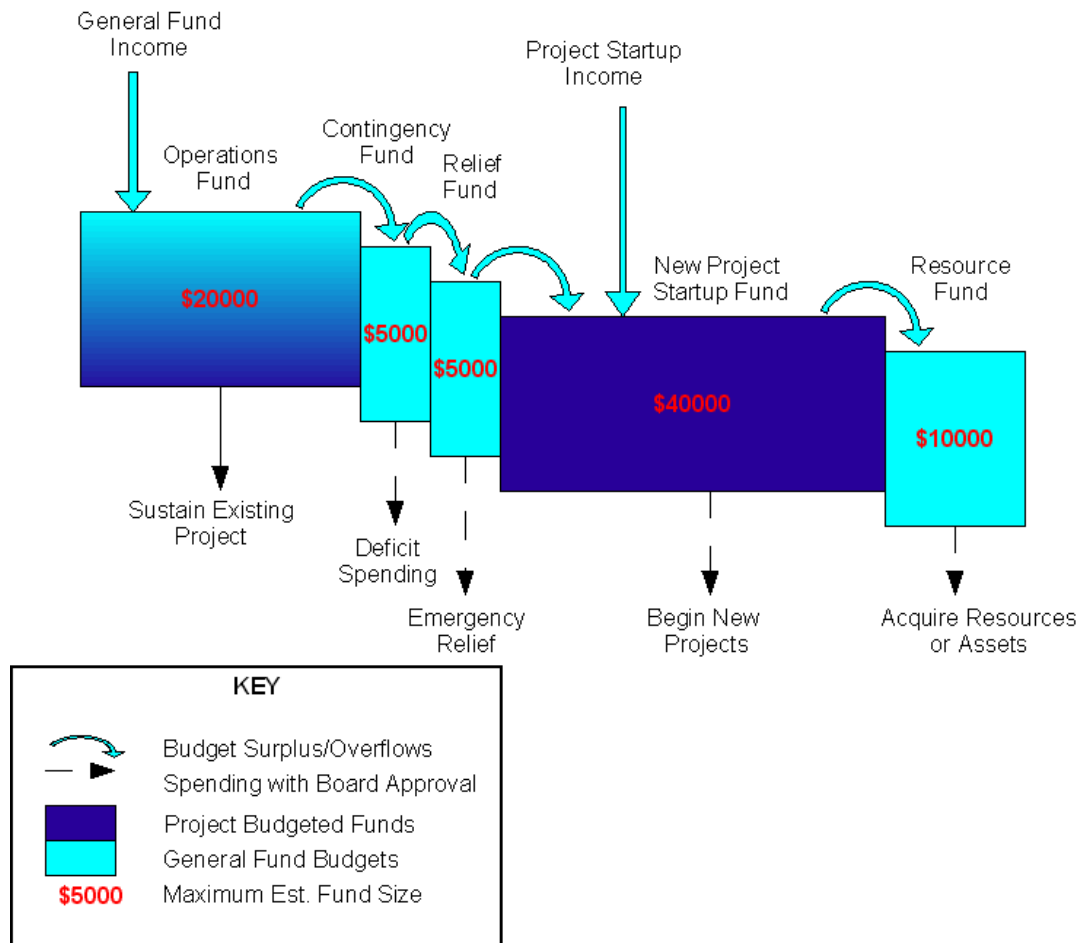
6.5 Funding Model

VI organizes its income into five main allocations:

1. Sustaining existing projects and General Fund (Operations Fund)
2. Establishing and maintaining a Contingency Fund
3. Establishing and maintaining a Relief Fund
4. Funds for new projects
5. Resource and capacity building

These funds are listed in decreasing priority where each subsequent fund relies on surpluses from the previous fund. The following picture illustrates this “waterfall” funding model:

Waterfall Funding Model



In most cases, income will be directed towards the General Fund for sustaining existing projects. A few examples of exceptions to this are as follows:

- A special fund raising event to kick off a new project
- A fund raising drive for relief after a serious drought
- Unusual gifts, grants, or gifts-in-kind given for a specific purpose

6.5.1 Operations Fund

This fund is the day-to-day operating fund representing the current needs of all active projects as well as any budgets for the General Fund for the upcoming fiscal year. Project Managers for ongoing projects submit an annual budget for the following fiscal year to the Executive Director 90 days before the end of the current fiscal year. The Executive Director reviews each budget and submits all of the budgets to the Board of Directors for the end-of-year board meeting.

The Executive Director is also responsible for submitting an annual budget for the General Fund. In the event that income exceeds the total of all budgets proposed for the upcoming fiscal year, surplus is directed into the Contingency Fund.

6.5.2 Contingency Fund

This fund covers any unforeseen emergencies such as emergency leave for staff members, evacuation, and any unanticipated disruption of funding including exchange rate fluctuations. It also serves to sustain existing projects (on a limited basis) during periods of deficit. The Contingency Fund shall never exceed 10% of all project costs plus \$2000 per field staff. Once this fund reaches the cap, all income is further directed towards the Relief Fund.

6.5.3 Relief Fund

This fund is to carry out disaster response and relief work. For example, in the event that all crops fail (including our own) from drought, VI will respond through various relief activities such as food, water, or seed distributions. VI's relief fund shall never exceed one quarter of the cost to sustain existing projects. Once the Relief Fund reaches this maximum, all income is further directed towards the New Project Fund.

6.5.4 New Project Fund

When staff members submit a proposal and budget, the Board decides the priority of the new project. A majority of VI's projects are likely to be long term (over three years). Based on past budget surpluses and anticipated future earnings, board members must decide how much should be raised before project start-up. Projects begin once the designated amount of funds are available. If VI does not have the capacity to begin new projects, surplus income will be directed into the Resource Fund.

6.5.5 Resource Fund

The Resource Fund is where all surpluses are directed once projects are funded, the contingency fund and relief funds are capped, and VI does not have the capacity to begin new projects. The Resource Fund is used to build the organization by hiring staff, acquiring assets, offering additional training, and funding assessments or research.

6.6 *Financial Accountability*

6.6.1 Financial Management System

VI is an organization consisting of multiple projects. Each project budget includes direct project costs. Administrative costs may be included in one or more General Fund budgets, or they may be shared proportionately across multiple project budgets. VI will not double allocate the same administrative costs to multiple projects.

The Board approves all budgets. Projects are implemented and expensed within the framework of their specific budgets. VI staff may write amendments to existing projects which state the reason why amendments have to be made, schedule changes, and/or the amount of additional funds needed. The Executive Director reviews all project amendments and appeals to the Board for approval.

VI monitors income and expenses through QuickBooks® accounting software. Prior to filing tax forms, VI will retain a Certified Public Accountant to review books and provide advice in filing to the IRS. In addition, VI will retain the services of Varnum, Riddering, Schmidt, and Howlett to answer any questions pertaining to legal procedures.

6.6.2 Financial Policies and Procedures

Several policies control the financial operations of VI including the Financial Controls Policy and the Purchasing and Procurement Policy. In addition, VI operates with a series of dedicated financial authorization forms and procedures.

VI also implements a separation of duties in regard to the mechanisms in which financial transactions are authorized, transacted, and recorded. The Executive Director or the Project Manager(s) authorizes the use of funds in accordance with their respective budgets as approved by the Board. The Accountant records and verifies all expenditures and prepares financial reports for the Executive Director, Project Managers, and the Board. One or more cashiers assigned to each approved budget handles the cash. This separation of duties is in keeping with standard financial accounting practices.

6.7 Fund Raising Plan

6.7.1 Strategies

As development work takes place on a long term basis, VI requires a steady amount of revenue each year to cover its existing projects, contingency and relief funds, as well as new project and resource funds. VI will conduct both ongoing fund raising and fund raising through special events.

As its primary fund raising strategy, VI will use word of mouth to spread information about its mission and activities and to solicit donations. VI will concentrate its fund solicitations on:

- Private foundations - VI will solicit private foundations that donate money to international development.
- Corporations - VI will also solicit corporations for donations, employee match grants, gifts-in-kind, and assets.
- Individuals - VI will solicit from individuals through word of mouth and its website where individuals can donate directly or purchase items where the proceeds go directly to the organization.
- Churches and Community organizations - VI will engage individuals from churches and communities in fund raising events including auctions, dinners, farm days, and speaking engagements.

In general, supporters can choose to give towards a specific project or towards VI's General Fund.

6.7.2 Schedule and Costs

Fund raising costs will be up to 5% of each project budget. If any additional funds are required, they will be allocated from VI's General Fund. Soliciting private foundations and corporations will occur continuously and generally incur a minimal

cost in printing materials. Fund raising events will be scheduled periodically as they will likely coincide with the time field staff are on home leave (approximately once a year). Auctions, dinners, and farm days may cost \$500-\$1,000 an event, but are likely to generate several times the amount spent.

Website fund raising will occur continuously and has the advantage of targeting a wider audience. At a small fee of approximately \$15/month, VI can maintain an e-commerce site. Individual items for sale such as art work can be purchased in the field at relatively low costs and sold at several times the purchase price. Items sold at auctions can generate an even greater amount of income.

6.7.3 Grant Management

VI values its relationship with donors and will maintain integrity in the management of grants. VI will report regularly to granters and notify them of any substantial change in the project's activities, financial outlook, or time line.

6.8 Awareness

VI will initially use the website, word of mouth, email, and free merchandise to make people aware of the organization and its mission and to seek new supporters. Interested people can sign up for monthly newsletters and semiannual publications by registering on the VI website or asking board members and staff.

VI will maintain a list of donors, supporters, interested parties, and organizations and addresses for sending monthly newsletters from staff in the field. In addition, VI will maintain another list for sending a semiannual publication called "Bridging the Gap", which contain articles about development work and the people and places where field staff are stationed. Both these publications serve the purpose of educating and informing donors and supporters and connecting them with field staff and beneficiaries.

VI will maintain other educational resources on its website including technical information about agriculture and plants. Staff will maintain a West African plant database, glossary of terms, and photos of dryland crops.

VI will make efforts to keep other related organizations, such as educational or research institutions, informed of its activities. This will serve the purpose of generating possible partnering relationships and the recruiting of volunteers or donors.

Appendix I –Organizational Chart

