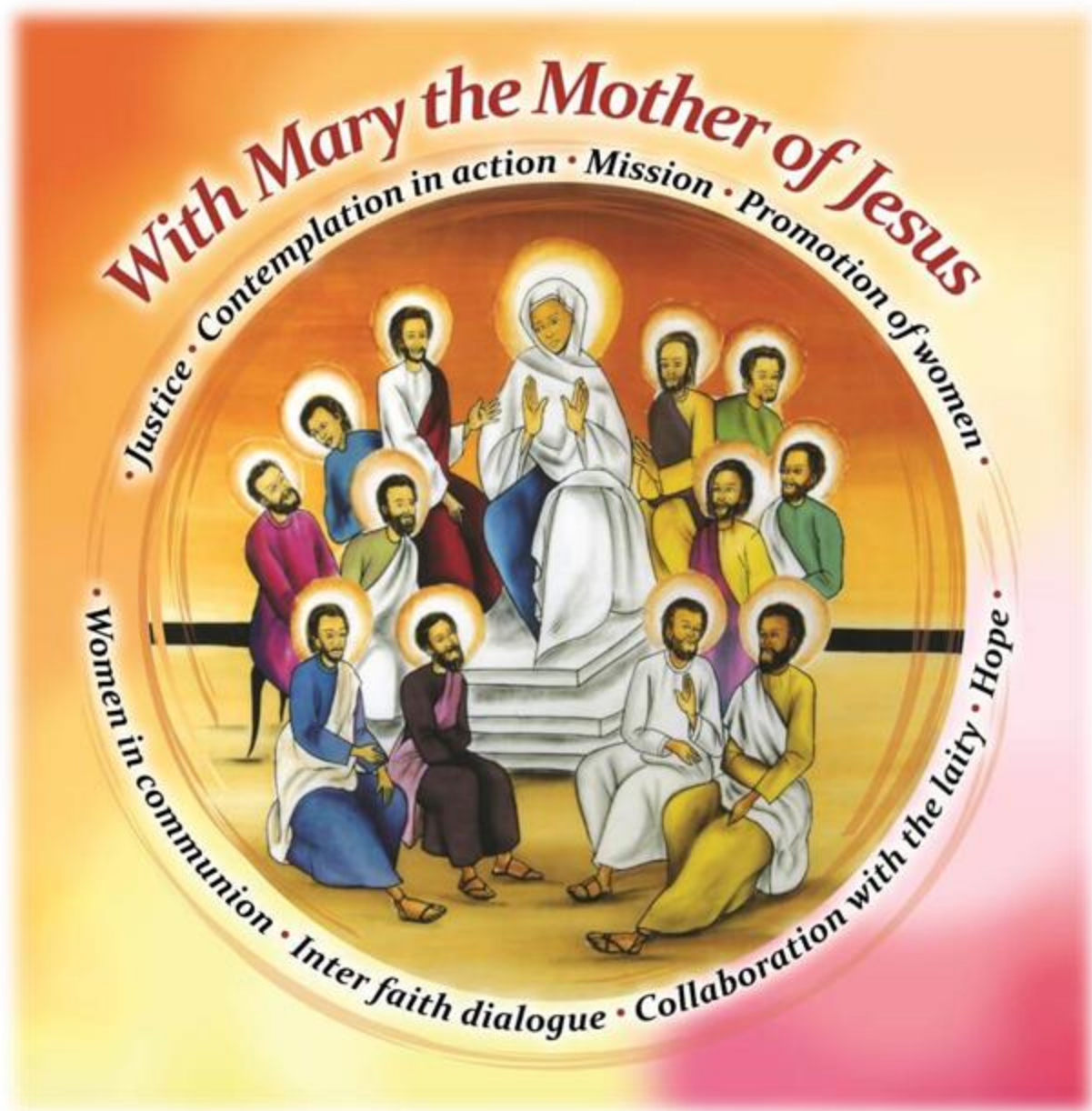


Strategy of the Justice Desk  
Of the Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles  
Irish Province  
2021 – 2023  
Executive Summary



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## Introduction

We, Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles, are dedicated to mission *ad gentes ad extra*, especially to the peoples of Africa. By God's grace, we serve where the Gospel has yet to be rooted and where human need is greatest. We in the Irish Province are committed to the promotion of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation, recognising that all three aspects are deeply interdependent. In 2018 we employed a Justice Officer to support this work. While our Sisters engage in the promotion of social justice in their many ministries, the OLA Justice Officer works with our Sisters and supports our promotion of JPIC as a Province at an institutional level. To guide the work of the Justice Officer and the Irish Province's pursuit of justice broadly, we have now developed a three-year strategic plan for 2021 to 2023.

Strategy is about discerning what we wish to achieve, identifying our resources, understanding our position in the world, and choosing tactics to achieve our goals. Much effort, and consultation with our Sisters, has gone into creating a strategic plan that is authentic to the Mission of the OLA Sisters and responsive to some of the most pressing issues of social and environmental justice in our world today. This strategic plan provides analysis of our environment and outlines our choices for how best to proceed in our pursuit of justice in the Irish and Tanzanian contexts.

Over the next three years, we will work in partnership with others to raise awareness and engage in advocacy in three specific areas: Support for Africa and Africans in Ireland; Tackling Human Trafficking; and Care for Creation and promotion of *Laudato Si'*. By so doing, through our prayer and action, we will continue to work effectively toward God's reign of peace and justice, and to respond to "the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor." (*Laudato Si'* 49)

Srs. Kathleen McGarvey, Maura Cranney, Maria Lee,  
OLA Provincial Leadership Team,  
Ardfoyle Convent,  
03/11/2020

## History and Mission of the Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles

Since our beginnings in 1876, the Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles continue to fulfil the intense missionary dream of our founder, Fr. Augustine Planque, to be of service to the Gospel particularly with the people of Africa. By the witness of our lives, the sharing of our faith and through our work with the poor wherever we are in the world, we strive to bring alive Christ's message of "Good News to the Poor". Our vision is to be Women of the Cenacle: we draw strength and inspiration from the experience of our mother Mary and the Apostles in the 'Upper Room' who were filled with the love, joy and energy of their Pentecost experience. Following their example, we strive to be signs of Hope for all peoples to whom we are sent:

To be courageous and competent women, like the Apostles, ready to leave all for the sake of the Gospel;

To live the Spirituality of the Cenacle which prepares us for our apostolic work;

To be witnesses to the universality of the Church by living in international communities;

To work for human promotion, especially of women and girls;

To contribute to the spread of God's reign of justice, peace and integrity of creation, especially in Africa.

## Our Vision for OLA Promotion of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation

At the heart of our mission is a commitment to justice, peace and the integrity of creation. Our priority in all of our apostolates is for the poor and marginalised, especially for women and children. Our Constitutions states:

"We express our option in a practical way by openness to the world and active commitment to the service of the poor. We work with less fortunate brothers and sisters for the promotion of human dignity and the coming of a world of justice, peace and freedom." (*OLA Constitution*, No. 37)

We understand justice as right relationship with God, creation, our community and our neighbour. Therefore concern for justice, peace, and care for the environment is not

peripheral to the proclamation of the Gospel and our apostolate; rather it gives life to our faith:

For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also (James 2:26)

Concern for justice is therefore central to the identity and mission of the OLA that calls each of us to act individually and collectively. We envision all our sisters, supported by our Justice Officer, involved in justice according to her own capacity: working to improve the lives of women and children, and especially of African origin; recognizing that mission is ongoing and mission is everywhere; understanding that Africa is not only a geographical location, and reaching out to the people of Africa wherever they are, be it in Ireland or in Africa. Drawing on our charism and experience of mission, we OLA Sisters commit to working for a just world where peace endures and creation flourishes.

### Guiding Orientations from the General and Provincial Chapters

We OLA Sisters are a faith-based community, not merely an organisation. The OLA follow patterns of activity and processes established by the OLA Constitutions, influenced by the prayer and culture of our community life. Areas of focus, or *orientations*, are mandated in the General and Provincial Chapters and further developed by the Provincial Leadership Team.

#### ***The Acts of General Chapter 2018 states:***

“Protection of the environment and commitment to justice and peace are more urgent now than ever. They should be a preferential option for the Church and for OLA today. In our text on Charism and Mission we have identified some priority areas on which we wish to focus our attention: refugees, migrants, displaced peoples, victims of human trafficking. Our commitment to Justice and Peace require us to be advocates for changing the local and global structures that bring about these situations.”

#### ***The 2018 General Chapter recommends that Provinces and Districts:***

“Strengthen our work for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation by setting up a commission. The resource persons in each entity form all Sisters and Communities to do a Social Analysis following the See-Judge-Act method. A. For better awareness of the situations of injustice; B.

To look for the 'WHY' of these situations; C. To define concrete and effective actions to be taken. Intensify the participation of all communities in the promotion of Justice, peace and Integrity of Creation in their local environment, through awareness campaigns, networking, and advocacy. Continue the reflection in all communities of *Laudato Si'* and JPIC in our OLA lifestyle, living justice among ourselves and with our collaborators. Boycott products produced by exploited workers."

***The Acts of the 11<sup>th</sup> Provincial Chapter 2019 states:***

"While injustices are many, we, OLA Sisters of the Irish Province, renew our particular commitment to the plight of refugees, trafficked, migrants and displaced persons."

***The 2019 Provincial Chapter recommends that the Irish Province:***

"Deepen our personal conversion, knowledge and commitment to hear the cry of the poor and the cry of creation: To Pray; To continue making explicit options of the poor, vulnerable and those on the periphery; To Deepen our appreciation of nature through walks and nature programmes; Ongoing formation including demonstrations for Sisters, co-workers, students on climate justice and recycling; To continue reflecting on *Laudato si'*; To complete a social analysis at Community level, on some particular area of injustice and to take necessary actions; to investigate the feasibility of an eco-energy audit of our properties and take necessary action. Deepen our collaboration with other OLA Provinces, SMA, AEFJN and other justice groups: To support existing justice groups; Greater involvement in the Great Green Wall project, the Laudato Tree Project and Thumbprint Campaign; To increase lobbying of politicians at both local and national level on JPIC issues; To participate in campaigns that are related to JPIC issues."

## Analysis and Consultation

The real world is dynamic and it is important that we are properly aligned with our environment in order to respond effectively. This strategic plan aims to provide guidance as to how best to promote social and environmental justice in Ireland and Tanzania. PEST, Porter's and SWOT analyses were completed in order to better understand how our Justice Desk can respond to the current reality. In December 2019 and January, February and March 2020, the Justice Officer facilitated a series of consultative workshops with our Sisters to gain their insights and contributions so that the OLA JPIC Strategic Plan would be authentic to the mission of the OLA, and complement our Sisters' ministries. Workshops were undertaken in Tanzania, Cork and Dublin, outlining some of the justice issues facing the communities in which our Sisters live and work, and recommending areas of focus. The outcome from these workshops were presented in the *Report on the Consultative Workshops for an OLA JPIC Strategic Plan*, which has already been shared with the Sisters of the Province.

## Our Resources

Identifying the resources available to us determines what is realistically possible in responding to our environment. Our key resources are as follows:

Justice Officer in Ireland; Justice Coordinator in Tanzania; Communications Officer in Ireland; Our website, social media platforms, and associated audiences; Our institutional relationship with SMA Justice Office; Our institutional relationship with AMRI; Our institutional healthcare partnerships in Tanzania; Our institutional educational and skills-training partnerships in Tanzania; Contacts and relationships that our Sisters possess which may be accessed; The expertise and experience of our Sisters; collaborative partnerships which we have cultivated.

## Our Strategic Approach: Collaborative Partnership Building

How we intend to approach our work is essential in determining the areas of focus and the tactics that are open to us. On the one hand, small organisations (the OLA Justice Desk can be considered such) can effect change by finding a niche and becoming highly focused in that area. However, we do not presently possess the know-how to become a niche expert. Furthermore, we have expressed a desire to operate in multiple areas. On the other hand, small organisations can develop complementary relationships and work in partnership with

others in order to achieve significant impact. By working collaboratively with other actors in this arena our efforts can gain profile and our collective contributions can become significant. The OLA are a faith *community* and not merely an organisation. We are contemplatives in action and as such our strategic approach tends to be emergent according to pattern and heavily influenced by our community culture and, we pray, guided by the Holy Spirit. The OLA pattern of working, culture and ethos – the personality of the Province – tend towards collaboration in our promotion of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation.

### **Our Strategy: Build Capacity through Engagement in Limited Areas**

A collaborative approach requires that we define and strengthen our competencies and enhance our capacity in key areas in order to become valuable partners and leaders of collaboration. We will focus on promoting justice in limited areas and building our capacity to engage effectively in those areas between 2021 and 2023. Our capacity building will target those areas that reflect the mission of the OLA, that have been highlighted by the General and Provincial Chapters in 2018 and 2019, and which have been identified in our strategic analysis. Our focus areas or strategic themes for engagement and capacity development are:

- Support for Africa and People of African Descent;
- Human Trafficking;
- Care for Creation and Promotion of *Laudato Si'*.

Engagement in these areas will involve capacity development in networking, expertise, projects and advocacy campaigns. This will allow us to secure a foothold in our selected areas, develop patterns of effective activity, and achieve a position of reputable and impactful awareness-raising and advocacy. As we progress, narrower areas of focus will emerge in which we will build real expertise, and open avenues for new strategic choices at the end of the period of this strategic plan. While these strategic themes cover both Ireland and Tanzania, we will create discrete annual plans specific to the realisation of those themes in both countries. This strategy paves the way for an increasingly ambitious and effective commitment to JPIC in these areas, and represents the OLA's bold determination to infuse our society with the Gospel values, and make present God's reign of justice and peace.



## Our Strategic Themes, Planning and Evaluation

Our strategy is composed of **three themes** divided into **five goals** and **thirteen objectives**. Each theme includes a menu of tactics to be drawn upon when creating our annual plans.

### **Our Themes:**

Nurturing Human Dignity – Building Our Capacity for Advocacy on Behalf of Africa and People of African Descent.

Nurturing Human Dignity – Building Our Capacity to Challenge Human Trafficking.

Nurturing Integral Ecology – Building Our Capacity to Promote Care for Creation.

### **Our Theory of Change:**

Witness to our values >>> identify the problem >>> consider our response >>> formulate our strategic goal >>> clarify our intended impact >>> establish our objectives >>> select the tactics we will employ.

### **Our Annual Action Plans:**

Based on the goals, objectives and tactics outlined in this strategy, we will create yearly action-plans to pursue our themes with a proposed budget to be approved by the PLT.

In Ireland, the OLA Justice Officer, in collaboration with OLA members of the OLA SMA Justice Committee, will develop the annual action-plan.

In Tanzania, the Justice Coordinator, in collaboration with OLA Justice Committee there, and supported by the Justice Officer, will develop the annual action-plan.

### **Measuring Success:**

Our threshold for success is to have reached a point in our capacity-building that our awareness-raising and advocacy can be **deemed to be impactful**. Metrics to assess progress in our capacity to have impactful influence will be determined according to the tactics we employ and the specifics of each theme. Key Performance Indicators will be associated with each annual action-plan based on progress made the previous year. A bi-annual review will be undertaken in order to measure progress against the objectives set out in the annual action-plans and the goals and objectives set out in this three year strategic plan.

**Theme: Nurturing Human Dignity – Building Our Capacity for Advocacy on Behalf of Africa and People of African Descent**

**Our Values:** We OLA Sisters stand for the equality of each human person, and we especially bear witness to the dignity of the people of Africa to whom we are called to mission.

**The Problem:** While Africa is a dynamic, vibrant and diverse continent, both Africa and people of African descent continue to be subject to negative worldviews that give rise to attitudes such as racism which denies the equal dignity of all God’s children. This is compounded by the legacy of colonialism, damaging trade relations, and unsustainable indebtedness which undermines the Common Good in Africa and hampers the human flourishing of its people.

**Our Response:** By the witness of our intercultural and international communities we OLA Sisters provide a vision of life that upholds the unique dignity of each human person, created in all our diversity by God. We stand against the attacks on the Common Good in Africa and commit to challenge unjust trade relations and exploitation which undermine the human flourishing for which we have all been made.

**Our Strategic Goals:**

1. To collaborate with others to build our capacity to advocate for just economic relations with Africa.
2. To collaborate with others to build our capacity to challenge racism in Ireland, especially with respect to women and children.
3. To build our capacity for advocacy in Tanzania based on our engagement with the social reality of our service-users, in order to challenge poverty and gender inequality.

**Our Intended Impact:** To secure a foothold in these spaces by having developed patterns of effective activity, locked-in relationships with collaborative partners, defined our target audiences and identified ways to mobilise them, in order to have achieved a position whereby we can engage in reputable and impactful awareness-raising and advocacy in relation to racism and just economic relations, and on behalf of our service-users in Tanzania.

## **Our Objectives:**

1. To build a network of partnerships to engage in policy advocacy at the national and EU level against exploitative economic practices in relation to Africa.
2. To create/capitalize on opportunities to raise awareness of unjust economic practices and provide policy solutions.
3. To identify and respond to specific injustices in the communities which we serve in Tanzania, especially affecting women and children.
4. To build partnerships to develop our capacity for advocacy regarding poverty and gender in Tanzania.
5. To identify and capitalize on mechanisms and partnerships to develop our capacity to challenge racism in Ireland.
6. To create/capitalize on opportunities to raise awareness of, and provide solutions to, racism in Ireland, especially as it affects women and children.

## **Our Tactics:**

### *In Ireland:*

The OLA Justice Officer will work with our Communications Officer to engage with the public; We will invite OLA Sisters to consider where she can support our JPIC strategic goals and objectives in her ministry;

We will work collaboratively with the SMAs to explore ways to challenge racism and advocate for just economic relations for Africa;

We will endeavour to build a relationship with INAR – Irish Network Against Racism;

We will use social media to challenge racism in Ireland following the dual tactic approach of:

Celebrating the OLA example of inter-cultural lifestyle as a counter to racism;

Raising awareness and condemning racial prejudice in Ireland;

We will work towards re-establishing an Irish antenna of the Africa Europe Faith and Justice Network in order to access policy proposals and advocacy campaigns;

We will identify avenues for engaging in Government policy consultation processes at national and EU level;

We will explore the possibility of building a relationship with Financial Justice Ireland;

We will explore the possibility of building a relationship with Misesan Cara;

We will identify and capitalise on sources of information regarding issues of economic injustice in relation to Africa;

We will build our capacity to engage audiences in discussion of issues of economic injustice in relation to Africa through seminars, webinars and conference;

We will use digital media to raise-awareness of unjust economic relations with Africa;

We will use social media to build communities committed to anti-racism and trade justice;

We will draw upon Catholic Social Teaching in order to encourage greater awareness of, and opposition to, racism and exploitation from a faith-based perspective among our audiences.

*In Tanzania:*

We will identify skills-training that would build the capacity of the Justice Commission;

We will invite OLA Sisters to consider where she can support our JPIC strategic goals and objectives in her ministry;

We will collect information on poverty and gender as it relates to access to healthcare;

We will collect information on poverty and gender as it relates to access to education;

We will identify potential partners with expertise in poverty and gender and seek ways of collaborating with them, especially in healthcare and education;

We will build our capacity to analyse and model data to develop resources for advocacy;

We will advocate for the need to identify and respond to issues of poverty and gender in healthcare and education;

We will conduct social analyses among women in our locations to identify specific problems;

We will challenge negative cultural values and taboos through community outreach and education – especially towards widows, migrant women and those with illness or disability;

We will raise awareness and greater education about female genital cutting especially among leaders in the community;

We will identify and cultivate potential champions for women's rights among local leadership;

We will identify supports that can be accessed to empower women to be independent;

We will promote greater access to education and skills training for girls and women;

We will provide material support to those in most need through provision of healthcare and income supports (especially food) as necessary, always giving preference to the life-giving option.

## *Theme: Nurturing Human Dignity – Building Our Capacity to Challenge Human Trafficking*

**Our Values:** We OLA Sisters believe that commitment to human dignity and freedom is at the heart of the Gospel and a Christ centred vision of life.

**The Problem:** Ireland has been described as a destination, source and transit country for human trafficking. Human trafficking is defined as the act of recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons; by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, for the purpose of exploitation. 283 victims of human trafficking were identified in Ireland between 2013 and 2017. Despite these figures human trafficking, remains on the periphery of Irish public consciousness.

**Our Response:** In opposition to human trafficking, which is an affront to the sanctity of the human person, we bear witness to the dignity and freedom for which we have been created, convinced that 'for freedom Christ has set us free'. (Galations 5:1)

**Our Strategic Goal:** To collaborate with others to build our capacity to advocate for policies that disrupt human trafficking and protect people who have been trafficked.

**Our Intended Impact:** To have secured a foothold in this space by having developed patterns of effective activity, locked-in relationships with collaborative partners, defined our target audiences and identified ways to mobilise them, in order to have achieved a position whereby we can engage in reputable and impactful awareness-raising and advocacy in relation to human trafficking.

### **Our Objectives:**

1. To create/capitalize on opportunities to raise awareness about human trafficking and practical steps that can be taken to disrupt it.
2. To identify and capitalize on mechanisms and partnerships to develop our capacity to engage with the anti-trafficking policy environment in Ireland.

3. To build a network of partnerships to engage in advocacy at the national and international level against human trafficking.

**Our Tactics:**

The OLA Justice Officer will work with our Communications Officer to engage with the public; We will invite OLA Sisters to consider where she can support our JPIC strategic goal and objectives regarding human trafficking in her ministry;

We will work collaboratively with the SMAs to explore ways to raise awareness and disrupt human trafficking;

We will build partnerships with anti-trafficking groups:

*APT – Action to Prevent Trafficking* to support their work at the national level;

*Cork Against Human Trafficking* to support their work at the local and national level;

*RENATE – Religious in Europe Network Against Trafficking and Exploitation* in order to access a European wide network and draw upon policy and campaign proposals;

*MECPATHS – Mercy Effort for Child Protection Against Trafficking with the Hospitality Sector* to engage with them on policy advocacy where possible;

*Ruhama* – to engage with them on policy advocacy where possible;

We will identify and capitalise on valuable sources of information regarding human trafficking;

We will identify avenues for engaging with the public policy environment at the national and international level by making submissions to reports, committees, treaty bodies and consultation processes.

We will build our capacity to engage audiences in discussion of human trafficking through seminars, webinars and conference;

We will use social media to raise-awareness of human trafficking in Ireland by posting comments, images, info-graphics and video;

We will use digital technology to build communities committed to disrupting trafficking;

We will draw upon Catholic Social Teaching in order to encourage greater awareness of, and opposition to, human trafficking from a faith-based perspective among our audiences.

## **Theme: Nurturing Integral Ecology – Building Our Capacity to Promote Care for Creation**

**Our Values:** We OLA Sisters believe that preserving and promoting the Integrity of Creation is essential to the promotion of justice. We believe that we are all part of an integral ecology and that we are called to be stewards of God’s Creation.

**The Problem:** The model of economic development which has dominated the world in recent decades has resulted in climate change and environmental degradation of our common home, the earth. While the poor have contributed least to this disaster, they suffer first and suffer most as a result of climate chaos. As Pope Francis has stated in *Laudato Si’*: “We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental.” (LS 139)

**Our Response:** Drawing on *Laudato Si’* which states that “Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature” (LS 139), we seek to promote an ecological understanding of our world underpinned by love and gratitude for God’s gift of creation.

**Our Strategic Goal:** To build a network of partnerships in order to enhance our capacity to promote the integral ecology perspective of *Laudato Si’* with a focus on Africa.

**Our Intended Impact:** To have secured a foothold in this space by having developed patterns of effective activity, locked-in relationships with collaborative partners, defined our target audiences and identified ways to mobilise them, in order to have achieved a position whereby we can engage in reputable and impactful awareness-raising and advocacy in relation to integrity of creation.

### **Our Objectives**

1. To identify and utilise information sources about the consequences of climate change for the people of Africa, focusing especially on harm done to women and children.

2. To build a network of collaborative partners.
3. To create/capitalise on opportunities to promote the integral ecology perspective of *Laudato Si'* among our audiences.
4. To create/capitalise on opportunities to promote awareness about the consequences of climate change for the people of Africa, especially as it affects women and children.

**Our Tactics:**

We will support the OLA Green Communities Campaign;

The OLA Justice Officer will work with our Communications Officer to engage with the public;

We will invite OLA Sisters to consider where in her ministry she can support the strategic goal and objectives;

We will collect information on the impact of climate change on Tanzania for use in advocacy at the national level in Tanzania and the global level;

We will work collaboratively with the SMAs to explore ways to promote care for creation, especially through engaging with and promoting the Thumbprint Campaign;

We will engage with organisations that are strategically valuable to promote care for creation;

We will engage with other religious congregations to collaborate to promote integral ecology;

We will network with the African Provinces of the OLA to collect information on the impact of climate change on their countries for use in advocacy at all levels;

We will identify opportunities to engage in direct political advocacy;

We will identify and promote specific local actions that can be taken to protect our environment;

We will use social media to raise-awareness of the integral ecology perspective by posting comments, images, info-graphics and video;

We will utilise the latest social media innovations to promote the *Laudato Si'* and integral ecology as tools for examining our relationship with our community and creation;

We will explore opportunities to host educational events such as seminars, webinars, conferences, and online book clubs with group discussion;

We will draw upon Catholic Social Teaching in order to encourage greater awareness of, and commitment to, care for creation from a faith-based perspective among our audiences.