



Civil Society Policy



Aster Mamo weaving furniture from bamboo native to the Bale Mountains in Ethiopia. Training the local community to make products from bamboo is just one of a number of projects carried out by the Bale EcoRegion Sustainable Management Programme. The programme is jointly funded by Ireland, the Netherlands and Norway and managed by SOS Sahel and FARM-Africa.

“ *All groups in society must play their part in the development process. Citizens have a right and responsibility to participate in and influence political decisions that affect their lives.* ”
White Paper on Irish Aid

Civil Society Policy

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I am very pleased to introduce Irish Aid's Civil Society Policy. Irish Aid has had a long history of supporting Irish civil society organisations and national civil society in developing countries to fight poverty, achieve sustainable development, promote human rights and contribute to good governance. This policy document builds on that experience setting out why and how we will support civil society in the future.

Foreword

Irish Aid believes that everyone has a role to play in reducing poverty and that citizens have a right and a responsibility to participate in and influence decisions that affect their lives. Civil society organisations allow citizens to come together to act collectively and participate in the development of their own communities and countries whether through demanding better services from the state, holding their government to account or by acting together to respond to their own needs.

In Ireland, civil society has played an important role in shaping the nation we live in and today Ireland has a very rich and vibrant civil society, which continues to play an important part in the daily life of this country. Ireland's own recent social and economic development was underpinned by the social partnership agreements which brought together government, employers, unions, farmers associations and other Irish civil society partners in support of agreed social and economic policy.

Civil society in developing countries should equally be given an opportunity to participate in the planning, implementation and monitoring of their country's national development and poverty reduction strategies. I believe that supporting national governments to create those opportunities is as important as building the capacity of civil society to avail of the opportunities. National and international civil society organisations have also got a role to play in, inter alia, delivering basic services where governments can not or will not; supporting poor and marginalised people to access services; promoting and advocating for human rights; and enabling citizens to participate in democratic processes.

This policy will guide Irish Aid's future support for civil society – both why and how we support the development of an active civil society in developing countries and also how we can best work with Irish development NGOs and other Irish civil society organisations to strengthen civil society in developing countries and reduce poverty. The policy defines our understanding of civil society and its role in development. It sets out the principles which will guide our interaction with civil society organisations and elaborates the purpose of that engagement.

A number of Irish development NGOs and missionaries have been working with communities in developing countries for many years. Irish Aid will continue to support their efforts. Irish Aid's proportion of funding for NGOs continues to be higher than most other donors. Ireland is also seeing a considerable growth in the number of Irish development NGOs. Through the implementation of this policy, we will try to ensure that the professionalism and quality of work for which Irish NGOs are known is maintained.

Ireland is committed to reaching the UN goal for official development assistance with the Millennium Development Goals as our common target. I hope that this policy can be the guide that enables Irish Aid to work in partnership with civil society organisations, North and South, towards poverty reduction and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Peter Power, T.D.

Minister of State for Overseas Development
at the Department of Foreign Affairs.

Executive Summary

Tackling poverty and achieving the Millennium Development Goals require the participation of all stakeholders. Civil society is a valued partner in the fight against poverty; in all cases where Irish Aid supports civil society organisations, this support is informed by Irish Aid's overall policy goals for development cooperation.

Changes in the way that aid is delivered and the aid effectiveness agenda present new challenges and new opportunities for civil society, as it strives to ensure that policy frameworks and processes are participatory and pro-poor. Civil society organisations also have an important role in relation to respect for human rights and governance, including influencing government policies in favour of poor and marginalised men and women.

A significant percentage of Irish Aid's budget goes to civil society organisations, largely to non-governmental organisations: considering this, the current changes in aid delivery and our broadened understanding of civil society, it is an appropriate time to set out a clear policy framework for our partnership with civil society. Through this policy, Irish Aid defines its view of civil society, the principles which will govern the engagement between Irish Aid and

civil society organisations, and sets out policy objectives and strategies to guide the allocation of resources, the quality of the programme and the relationships that underpin it.

A broad-based definition of civil society includes formal and informal organisations, groups, associations and individuals that operate independently of the state, examples include trade unions, professional associations, sport and cultural organisations, community-based organisations, faith-based organisations, social movements and networks, independent media and academia. The role of volunteers and voluntarism is crucial for the sustained operation of many civil society organisations.

In order for civil society to grow and strengthen, it must operate in an enabling environment. Governments have a key responsibility for creating the conditions that enable civil society to grow and flourish. This includes respect for the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association, and the right to freedom of expression. In addition, the state can create positive conditions through legislation and regulation that support the role of civil society and encourage citizens' participation.



The children of coffee producer members of the Unión de Cooperativas Agropecuarias (UCA) SOPPEXCCA in Jinotega, Nicaragua waiting to perform a coffee picking dance for visitors.

Civil society organisations can have a positive impact on political and policy processes. Irish Aid sees itself as having a role in encouraging and promoting this form of social partnership between government and civil society. These partnerships can enable poor and marginalised groups to have greater influence over public policy and resource allocation than would otherwise be the case.

Partnership is the cornerstone of Irish Aid's civil society policy. Partnership between Irish Aid and civil society organisations is built on a shared commitment to sustainable development, gender equality, human rights and good governance. At present, Irish Aid has many examples of such partnerships with Irish NGOs and other civil society groups and current funding mechanisms are intended to deepen this partnership and enhance its impact in the developing world through dialogue and shared learning.

Based on the definition of civil society, the concept of partnership and acknowledging the importance of the relationship between the state and civil society, Irish Aid has identified two main objectives that will contribute to a strong civil society with positive benefits for sustainable and equitable development:

1. *To support an enabling environment for civil society to organise and engage with government and its own broader constituencies; and*
2. *To support the role of civil society:*
 - a. *in promoting participation and good governance;*
 - b. *in ensuring pro-poor service delivery and pro-poor growth; and*
 - c. *globally and nationally, to build a constituency for development, human rights and social justice.*

Our existing partnerships with Irish NGOs are a valuable resource for delivering on these policy objectives. Increasingly, Irish NGOs work in partnership with local civil society organisations across a wide range of sectoral and/or thematic programmes. A key focus is improving the ability of organisations to engage in innovative service delivery, research, advocacy and networking. This is encouraged by Irish Aid, both where it leads to better linkages with the state and with other civil society organisations.

In addition to the support provided bilaterally to each Irish NGO, Irish Aid attaches importance to the role of Dóchas,

the Irish Association of Non-Governmental Development Organisations. Irish Aid and Dóchas intend to strengthen dialogue mechanisms on policy and practice issues, within the framework of the White Paper on Irish Aid and the Millennium Development Goals.

In the programme countries and other countries where Ireland has representation, Irish Aid will prioritise support for national and local civil society organisations in the context of national anti-poverty strategies. We will work with government partners and support opportunities for country-level civil society to participate in the consultation and planning processes that inform these strategies. Subsequently, the focus should shift to implementation and monitoring the effectiveness of government performance in the delivery of services.

We will coordinate with other donors and with international and national civil society to support civil society's capacity needs and to advocate for institutional space for its participation in political and public policy processes. It is vital that those marginalised from political and economic decision-making be drawn into the centre and that their needs and interests be represented in poverty reduction efforts. This policy paper seeks to set out how we will support civil society so that it can perform its role as effectively as possible.

1. Context

Civil society is a broad term, encompassing organisations outside the government sector; ... such organisations are a vital component of healthy democracy in both developed and developing countries.

White Paper on Irish Aid, 2006

1.1 Introduction

All sections of society have a role to play in order to eliminate poverty and achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The opportunity for and ability of civil society to play its role is an essential measure of a country's development process.

Over the past decade, there has been a significant shift in the way donors, including Irish Aid, channel aid to partner countries. There is a greater focus on harmonising and aligning donor programmes with national or other strategic planning and expenditure frameworks, in line with the commitments in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. A reason for this change is the wish to place development in the hands of the partner country, its government and citizens. This new way of working, which places emphasis on local ownership, results and accountability, presents new opportunities and challenges for civil society organisations as they strive to ensure that policy frameworks and processes are participatory and pro-poor, that national strategies respond to the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable, that monitoring frameworks capture the realities of the poor, and that donors and partner governments are accountable to their citizens.

Development processes often marginalise different sections of society, such as poor men and women, minorities and the disabled. Through civil society organisations, marginalised sections of society can be enabled to participate and contribute to the overall development of their community, region and country. A strong civil society can be a complement and a counterbalance to government especially where civil society influences political and economic decisions in favour of poorer and marginalised men and women. Ireland has a very rich civil society, which has played and continues to play an important part in the daily life of the country.

Civil society is a broad term that covers organisations outside the public sector including community groups,

educational establishments, women's organisations, faith-based organisations, professional associations, trade unions, self-help groups, social movements and advocacy groups. Historically, much of our support to civil society has been channelled to non-governmental development organisations (NGOs). This policy has a broader scope and includes civil society organisations which, through their membership, expertise or research capacity, can make a strategic contribution to national policies to enable growth and development and the achievement of human rights. As the understanding of the role of civil society has expanded, it is appropriate that a civil society policy be developed to reflect this change. The policy will guide Irish Aid's direct and indirect support to civil society in the developing world.

This policy recognises that civil society organisations do not automatically make a positive contribution to society; not all forms of organisation are inherently good and progressive. Some organisations and movements within civil society can be a source of conflict where they represent narrow sectional interests; they can display intolerant, sectarian and anti-democratic tendencies. Cognisant of this, Irish Aid will make distinctive choices based on shared values and a sound understanding of the vision and mission of all partners.



A member's record book from a savings and loans group in Uganda

1.2 Defining Civil Society

There are many definitions of civil society. Civil society is seen as the space between the household and state where citizens organise to provide or advocate for services and institutions that the state fails to provide or does not have a responsibility to provide, but which are considered important or necessary by citizens. Various interests and ideologies compete within civil society as they do within all societal institutions.

Civil society usually organises in discrete local groups which may eventually coalesce into larger organisations and networks, where organisations share aims and identify the benefits of critical mass. When this level of organisation occurs, civil society can begin to promote the interest of its members in national policy and other relevant decision making forums.

In practical terms, while the focus may often seem to be on NGOs, civil society includes trade unions, professional associations, sport and cultural organisations, community-based organisations and cooperatives, faith-based organisations, social movements and networks, independent media institutions and academia. The role of volunteers and voluntarism is crucial for the sustained operation of many civil society organisations even if they have paid staff. It is important that civil society organisations are rooted in the needs and interests of communities and that the linkage to those communities is real and not supported solely through external funding.

1.3 Civil Society and Development

Irish Aid is committed to equitable development. This requires the active participation of different groups of citizens to ensure that the benefits of development are shared across societies. Development processes often marginalise poor men and women and their lack of power prevents them from influencing political and economic decisions. Participation through civil society organisations can enhance the political influence of excluded groups, promote their concerns and enable them to hold government to account.

Equally, there are many organisations which may not enjoy a wide support base within society but may bring other skills and expertise to bear on the wider political and

policy processes. Trade unions, professional organisations and research institutes are examples of civil society organisations that may make a strategic contribution to development processes arising out of their own comparative advantage.

Many civil society organisations have a reputation for innovative programmes that can inform government policy and be scaled up for national impact. There is considerable interest among donors in promoting their involvement in the policy processes connected with sector-wide programmes (SWAPS) and poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs). This requires adequate resources if civil society organisations are to participate on a partnership basis with government.

Governments in developing countries have difficulty for a variety of reasons in providing social services to communities, particularly those that are marginalised or geographically remote. Civil society organisations can provide services in situations which governments, for a variety of capacity, economic and political reasons, do not. Civil society organisations can also be valuable partners in promoting Irish Aid's policy priorities of gender equality, environmental sustainability, HIV and AIDS, and good governance. In recent years, many civil society organisations have adopted a rights-based approach as the framework for their development interventions. This approach focuses on helping people to understand and exercise their rights as citizens as laid out in international covenants. Where the context allows, the approach involves working with state institutions to enable them to respond to citizens' rights and to meet their responsibilities as duty bearers to protect and promote the human rights of all citizens.

The rights-based approach to development has helped to differentiate the role of civil society from that of the state. In the past, civil society organisations often established parallel service delivery functions and tried to replace the role of the state in service delivery. The limitations of this approach are now widely recognised and civil society organisations now tend to seek a complementary role in service delivery, combining service delivery with advocacy for improved responses from the state.

In fragile states or countries in crisis, civil society has often been severely weakened by conflict and instability. Strong civil society organisations, especially women's groups, have a particularly important role in post-conflict states. As well as providing humanitarian relief, this includes protection for and advocacy on behalf of vulnerable groups

and individuals. It also includes the articulation of an agenda to tackle the causes and consequences of conflict based on human rights and government accountability. This work is difficult and often dangerous but it is essential to long-term peace, justice and stability. Civil society groups deserve recognition for this key role and strong support from the international community.

The tensions between the state and civil society are often given inadequate attention in development discourse. These tensions centre on the appropriate role of civil society, its legitimacy and representativeness, and its accountability to a particular constituency. On the civil society side, relations with the state can falter around fears of being co-opted, the ad hoc nature of consultation processes, unclear expectations in relation to policy processes and institutional obstacles to participation.

Irish Aid is aware that external support to civil society to enable its participation or to facilitate consultation can undermine the role of democratic institutions in negotiating the interests of different groups within society. As donors, we have a responsibility to ensure that support to civil society does not distort democratic institutions, such as the role of the parliament. Our support to civil society will be part of a broader, balanced governance strategy.

Lastly, civil society in Ireland has an important role to play in building support for international development and global human rights. The White Paper noted the need for the Irish public to have a greater awareness and understanding of the underlying causes of poverty and underdevelopment in the world. Irish civil society, including the media, can increase awareness and understanding of development issues.

1.4 Irish Aid support for civil society

At present Irish Aid supports the work of civil society in the developing world through a number of mechanisms including:

- > development cooperation programmes in Irish Aid programme countries that include civil society components;
- > civil society funding schemes administered from Irish Aid headquarters;

- > micro project schemes in developing countries where Ireland has an embassy or is accredited; and
- > funds that Irish Aid provides to the EU or international organisations, including the UN family of organisations.

Increasingly, governments in developing countries are also channelling resources to civil society organisations to deliver specific services in their country. Irish Aid recognises the value of this approach when it is underpinned by the principles of partnership, mutual learning and respect for the autonomy of civil society organisations. Donors must ensure that, in supporting civil society in the developing world, accountability between a state and its citizens remains the primary goal.



Esias Waryo in southern Ethiopia is participating in a farmer research programme and has successfully increased his yields of maize, pigeon peas (shown here) and elephant grass. The programme, which is supported by Irish Aid in Southern Ethiopia and Tigray, is being implemented by a consortium of research institutions, NGOs and local authorities.

➤ Box 1 Guiding Principles

Partnership and Local Ownership

Ireland's relationship with the developing world will be based on a spirit of partnership and equality... We will also work in partnership with International and non-governmental organisations which share our priorities.

Irish Aid will work in partnership with Irish and international civil society organisations, and will place an increasing emphasis on partnership with local civil society organisations in developing countries. We will continue to directly support local civil society organisations with an increasing emphasis on partnership with their respective local communities and constituencies. Characteristics of good partnership are a long-term and sustained relationship based on common values and approaches; a clear sense of equality based on respective contributions and responsibilities; mutual accountability – downward towards communities as well as upwards towards donors; clear division of roles and responsibilities; and collaborative decision-making and ways of working.

Irish Aid will support organisations that are rooted in local culture and society rather than encourage the creation of new forms of organisation that are externally driven. These organic organisations are important, if not essential, for the promotion and practice of democratic values, equality and tolerance.

Effectiveness and Quality Assurance

We will use public resources efficiently and effectively, providing value for money for the Irish taxpayer. ...Rigorous audit and evaluation will inform our work to ensure that resources are used to optimal effect to achieve value for money and that we learn from past experience.

Irish Aid will support organisations that are committed to the efficient utilisation of scarce resources through cooperation with partners in civil society. Mobilisation of national and local resources will be encouraged. Irish Aid is also conscious of the need for accountability for the use of public funds to the Irish public. Irish Aid will require civil society organisations to demonstrate financial accountability for funding received and strategic accountability for the quality and effectiveness of programmes funded. This includes downward accountability which is where civil society organisations report and are accountable to their constituencies or members.

Coherence

Within Irish Aid itself, we will work to ensure coherence across the wide range of development assistance instruments employed and to minimise and eliminate inconsistencies and contradictions.

Irish Aid will ensure coherence between our support for civil society organisations and other development assistance programmes, in particular in Irish Aid programme countries. We will encourage consultation and dialogue between civil society partners and Irish Aid at country level to promote coherence and identify synergies.

Long-term sustainability

Our interventions will be durable and will bring real benefits over the long term. We will work towards sustainable improvements in the lives of ordinary people through building systems to address the causes of poverty rather than simply ameliorating the symptoms.

Irish Aid will support civil society organisations that consider the longer term impact, including the environmental impact, and sustainability of their interventions. We will encourage the strengthening of indigenous institutional and technical capacity to ensure the long-term management and maintenance of interventions.

2. Civil Society Policy

Irish Aid will abide by and encourage its civil society partners to respect and promote the guiding principles of the White Paper on Irish Aid.

These guiding principles (Box 1) are crucial if civil society mobilisation is to be an instrument for poor women and men to move out of poverty and improve their quality of life. We will endeavour to respect and promote these principles through our engagement with civil society partners in order to develop mutually beneficial and collaborative arrangements.

2.1 Policy Goal

The policy goal of Irish Aid's engagement with civil society is:

To strengthen and widen the space for men and women to act collectively and to participate in sustainable development processes.

2.2 Policy Objectives

The policy identifies interlinked objectives that are central to achieving the overall policy goal:

1. *To support an enabling environment for civil society to organise and engage with government and its own broader constituencies; and*
2. *To support the role of civil society:*
 - (a) *in promoting participation and good governance;*
 - (b) *in ensuring pro-poor service delivery and pro-poor growth; and*
 - (c) *globally and nationally, to build a constituency for development, human rights and social justice.*

Objective 1

To support an enabling environment for civil society to organise and engage with government and its own broader constituencies.

The creation of a sound regulatory and legislative environment is fundamental if civil society is to develop and function. Through its policy dialogue with partner

governments, Irish Aid will encourage respect for the basic rights necessary for civil society to flourish. These include freedom to associate, freedom to assemble and the right to free speech. Irish Aid will also encourage partner governments to establish platforms for dialogue with civil society organisations in a transparent and systematic manner at national and local levels.

We recognise the importance of good governance for civil society organisations. This includes maintaining an open and accountable relationship with its own constituencies and members; being transparent and inclusive in decision-making processes; and practicing democratic and open governance in the management of organisations. Irish Aid will support civil society organisations to strengthen their internal governance structures and accountability mechanisms.

Networking and coalition building are important for civil society to be effective. Networks enable the pooling of resources, the building of alliances around specific advocacy agendas, and can act as peer-support mechanisms within the broader sector. Building such common platforms is an integral part of strengthening civil society and is, primarily, the responsibility of civil society organisations themselves. Irish Aid will support such activities as part of its overall contribution to supporting an enabling environment.

Objective 2 (a)

To support the role of civil society in promoting participation and good governance.

The right to participate in development is increasingly seen as central to sustainable and equitable development. Irish Aid will support processes which will enable civil society organisations, particularly those representing vulnerable groups such as women's organisations, child rights organisations or associations of people living with HIV and AIDS, to participate in all stages from consultation and policy development through to service delivery and evaluation. Irish Aid will support citizens' organisations to hold state institutions to account by exerting pressure for improved quality and access to information and services, as well as increased transparency and citizen accountability from democratic

institutions such as the justice and parliamentary systems.

The existence of a strong and impartial justice system, based on international norms and standards, is integral to the promotion and protection of human rights and democracy. Irish Aid will support civil society organisations to play a role in building the capacity of key institutions, and also in generating an understanding of and participation in the justice system on the part of citizens.

We recognise the increasingly important role of public policy partnerships between government and civil society. Civil society can help shape the political and policy agenda by giving voice to concerns that otherwise would not have prominence, particularly those that represent the views of groups that are marginalised on the basis of gender, caste, class, ethnicity or disability. Irish Aid will support a number of crucial activities aimed at influencing policy processes in favour of pro-poor outcomes, such as the documentation of lessons learnt from grassroots work with diverse communities; monitoring of government performance; research and policy analysis; and pro-poor advocacy.

Where countries are in crisis, Irish Aid will support civil society to articulate and contribute to an agenda for peace and conflict resolution. We will place an emphasis on supporting women's organisations to enable their participation in peace processes and to increase their political and economic participation in post-conflict reconstruction in line with UN Security Council Resolution 1325. We will also specifically support activities aimed at preventing and responding to gender-based violence in conflict and non-conflict situations.

Objective 2 (b)

To support the role of civil society in ensuring pro-poor service delivery and pro-poor growth.

Irish Aid recognises the responsibility of the state to develop a policy framework for service delivery and economic development. Where the state has difficulties in providing services to its citizens, we will support civil society organisations engaged in implementing service delivery programmes that fit with their competencies, enhance community participation for sustainable outcomes, and align with national planning or other strategic frameworks.

Irish Aid will discourage civil society organisations from building up parallel service delivery structures but rather

encourage them to design interventions that create incentives or pressure for improved performance from the state. If the mandate of organisations involves service delivery, this should be carried out in partnership with the state, where this is possible. Irish Aid will support organisations which aim to improve the quality of services for the poor and community institutions, such as school committees and water user groups, involved in local development initiatives.

We recognise the role of civil society in pro-poor growth. Irish Aid will support civil society organisations which seek to improve the conditions under which the poorest members of society participate in the market. Examples may include: establishing micro-credit organisations; supporting women's groups in diversifying income sources; development of ecotourism by community associations; or organising groups into cooperatives or networks to improve their economic power vis-à-vis the market.

We will also support civil society organisations to exert a positive influence on the enabling and regulatory environment for economic development, particularly strategic interventions that promote economic policy in favour of equitable and sustainable development.

Objective 2 (c)

To support the role of civil society, globally and nationally, to build a constituency for development, human rights and social justice

Irish Aid is committed to supporting the role of civil society organisations in Ireland and internationally in promoting solidarity linkages between global citizens for a just and more equal world. This includes support for development education¹ and advocacy activities in Ireland carried out in partnership with civil society in developing countries.

Worldwide, citizens face the challenge of understanding the linkage between global policies and persistent poverty and inequality. Promoting and supporting linkages between citizens across the globe, using available information technology, can improve mutual understanding and make effective social action more possible.

¹ Irish Aid's support for development education is set out in the "Development Education Strategy Plan 2007-2011: Promoting public engagement for development"

3. Civil Society Strategy

Irish Aid will continue to support the work of a wide range of civil society organisations including international non-governmental organisations, Irish-based civil society organisations, and organisations based in programme countries or elsewhere in the developing world.

3.1 Irish-based and International Civil Society Organisations

Irish Aid will implement its civil society policy in partnership with Irish-based civil society organisations, civil society organisations in developing countries, international and multilateral organisations and partner governments.

We will work with organisations which have a clear commitment to poverty reduction and can demonstrate results, with strong downward, accountable relationships with communities, and that work to a clear rooted vision, realistic objectives and coherent strategies.

Irish Aid will work with Irish-based and international civil society organisations by providing programme and project funding, where possible on a multi-annual basis. The guidelines for the various funding mechanisms are based on the policy objectives and principles outlined in this document.

The main characteristics of the new funding schemes are:

- > Multi-annual timeframes where appropriate;
- > A programmatic approach where appropriate;
- > Emphasis on partnership and local ownership;
- > Strategic engagement with the poverty reduction agenda;
- > Emphasis on organisational effectiveness, best practice and value for money;
- > Mechanisms for capacity building and institutional development;

- > Emphasis on quality standards, lesson learning and sharing; and
- > A focus on results and scaling up for impact.

Irish Aid recognises the importance for Irish-based organisations to develop their own capacity in order to better help their partners in developing countries and the funding mechanisms are designed with this in mind. Irish Aid will encourage and support civil society organisations to engage proactively in assessing their capacity needs and in designing and implementing capacity development interventions.

In order to receive multi-annual and programmatic funding, organisations are expected to have developed standards of accountability, appropriate management systems and a level of programme quality. While the bulk of resources will be channelled programmatically, it is recognised that a programmatic approach may not necessarily be the best approach for all activities. Project funding will focus on the development of innovative strategies and approaches for lesson learning; targeting groups that otherwise are not benefiting from mainstream interventions; once-off projects that have a catalysing or strategic impact; and flexible funding in situations of rapid and evolving change.

When funding discrete activities, Irish Aid will encourage organisations seeking funding to locate their activities in a broader strategic environment, and in national, regional or international planning contexts, i.e. to place their activities in the bigger picture.

In addition to the support provided bilaterally to Irish NGOs, Irish Aid will also support networking among Irish civil society organisations including continuing support to Dóchas, the Irish Association of Non-Governmental Development Organisations. The relationship between Irish Aid and Dóchas is an important point of contact and cooperation between Irish Aid and the Irish non-government sector. Irish Aid and Dóchas will strengthen dialogue mechanisms on policy and practice issues within

the framework of the White Paper on Irish Aid and the Millennium Development Goals. The capacity of the sector as a whole to carry out research and policy analysis and act as a forum for learning will benefit from sustained support to Dóchas both from its own membership and from Irish Aid.

Irish Aid recognises that Irish missionary organisations have carried out remarkable work in the field of development over many years and in doing so have built up expertise and extensive networks through which they continue their development work. Irish Aid will continue to support the development work of Irish missionary organisations.

3.2 Working in Programme Countries

Irish Aid works in a number of countries where a direct relationship with the host government is established on an official basis. Irish Aid interfaces with partner governments in a variety of ways and channels development cooperation resources through a range of aid modalities. These aid modalities include general budget support, sector-wide programming and local development programmes.

The strength and capacity of civil society varies from country to country and is a product of historical, political, economic and social factors. Civil society organisations, through their own platforms and networked structures, will be supported to undertake their own analysis and develop a plan for strengthening the institutions of civil society. There are a number of methodologies for carrying out such an assessment, which can be supported at country level.

The ways in which we support and engage with civil society will vary from context to context. The following is a general guide to the type of interventions that we will seek to support.

An Enabling Environment:

- > Advocate, through the policy dialogue process with governments, for the development of a positive regulatory environment for civil society organisations to operate effectively;
- > Encourage the creation of institutional mechanisms for dialogue between government and civil society with transparent and accountable structures and processes;

- > Encourage civil society to organise within their sectors, to cooperate and build inter-organisational alliances and networks in order to influence the political agenda in favour of pro-poor outcomes;
- > Make resources available to civil society organisations for research, consultation, policy analysis and advocacy and networking activities; and
- > Work with other donors and partner governments to develop trust funds, pooled funds and other funding and capacity building mechanisms that will reduce competition, and enhance coordination and efficiency in the funding of civil society organisations.

Good Governance, Human Rights and Democracy:

- > Support civil society to enhance their government's accountability to citizens;
- > Balance such support for civil society with support for parliaments and public administration institutions to develop their institutional capacity for increased transparency and accountability;
- > Support civil society organisations that have a mandate to protect and promote human rights, especially in countries in crisis;



A water tank in Kagarama, Uganda, constructed by the community under the Diocese of Kigezi's Water and Sanitation programme supported by Tearfund and financed by Irish Aid

- > Support civic education initiatives; and
- > Make special provision to support women's organisations.

Pro-poor Service Delivery and Pro-poor Growth:

- > Where necessary, provide support to civil society organisations for pro-poor service delivery activities while encouraging the state to clearly set out the policy framework and meet its service delivery responsibility;
- > Encourage the development of supportive community-based structures that will enhance the efficiency and relevance of service delivery for the poorest and most vulnerable;
- > Support the development of social capital where networks and organisations enable women and men to access resources that would individually be unavailable to them e.g. credit, marketing opportunities and processing;
- > Target support to organisations that represent groups that are marginalised from political and economic processes, such as women's organisations, people living with HIV and AIDS, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, etc; and
- > Identify and support partners from civil society whose comparative advantage and expertise make them useful policy partners for government and donors

3.3 Working with Multilateral Institutions

In recent years, multilateral institutions including the United Nations, its funds and agencies, and the World Bank have displayed an interest in and commitment to engaging civil society, recognising that drawing in a multiplicity of diverse actors is essential for effective action on global priorities. The challenge at country level is to ensure that engagement and dialogue with civil society occurs in a predictable and transparent manner. This is essential if civil society organisations are to maintain a commitment to participation in policy processes. We will:

- > Encourage multilateral institutions to strengthen their dialogue with civil society organisations at country level
 - > Encourage multilateral institutions to use their influence with national governments with a view to encouraging consultation with civil society in governmental deliberative processes to which they are party, such as poverty reduction strategies;
 - > Support appropriate UN agencies in their donor coordination function in relation to civil society;
 - > Support UN agencies to develop multi-donor pooled funds or trust funds to enhance civil society organisations' capacity to participate in public policy processes; and
 - > Monitor the performance of multilateral organisations in facilitating participation of civil society stakeholders in the design of their operational strategies and programmes.
- Irish Aid will strengthen the role of civil society organisations in global policy processes such as WTO trade negotiations and UN reform. Irish Aid will:
- > Engage actively in discussion of relevant aspects of policy;
 - > Ensure the timely release of information pertaining to particular policy issues;
 - > Support networking and coordination between civil society organisations to enhance their effective participation and to enable them to negotiate common positions;
 - > Develop and make available the criteria for deciding which civil society organisations might participate in consultations, and agree and clarify the role of civil society organisations in the policy process; and
 - > Ensure the inclusion of the most relevant constituencies on Irish delegations attending international policy conferences.

4. Management

4.1 Institutional Arrangements

Strengthening and supporting civil society will be a shared objective across the whole of the Irish Aid programme. The oversight responsibility for Irish Aid's engagement and support of civil society will rest with Civil Society Section. Other sections will seek advice and support from that section in the implementation of the civil society policy in their relevant areas.

Civil Society Section

Civil Society Section will be responsible for funding Irish-based and international NGOs involved in poverty reduction and sustainable development. There will be a close and coordinated arrangement with Emergency and Recovery Section in relation to promoting coherence with common partners. Further policy development work is required to identify the role of civil society in countries suffering from chronic crisis and in fragile states.

Civil Society Section will also liaise with, advise and support non-programme country missions supporting national civil society organisations using the in-country micro projects scheme (ICMPS). The section will support these missions to develop strategies to support civil society organisations in line with this policy.

Civil Society Section will continue to take the lead in managing the dialogue relationship between Irish Aid and Dóchas.

Other sections with Irish Aid Headquarters

Emergency and recovery section will continue to engage with and support Irish and international NGOs responding to the basic needs of people in emergency situations and supporting vulnerable people in post-emergency situations to rebuild their lives and livelihoods, including the rehabilitation of physical and institutional infrastructure following major emergencies. We will also support NGOs to strengthen institutional and human resources for emergency preparedness.

The UN and EU sections will be responsible for promoting the civil society policy objectives in our dialogue with multilateral agencies and, in cooperation with programme country missions, for monitoring the performance of multilaterals in engaging with civil society and facilitating

their participation in the design and implementation of poverty reduction strategies.

An additional opportunity for dialogue is the Development Forum. Convened twice each year by the Advisory Board for Irish Aid, the Development Forum brings together the Minister and senior Irish Aid officials on the one hand, and representatives of the missionary and NGO communities on the other, for wide-ranging discussions on development policy and strategic issues.

Technical section will provide support to all other sections and programme countries with a view to ensuring the quality of civil society programmes and projects supported by Irish Aid, that the policy priority issues of HIV and AIDS, gender equality, environmental sustainability and good governance are mainstreamed, and that Irish Aid support for civil society is in line with best practice and commitments under the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.

Programme Countries

The Programme Countries sections and missions will be responsible for ensuring that Country Strategy Papers include strategies for supporting and engaging with civil society in line with this policy.

The missions will also be responsible for engaging Irish and local NGOs in dialogue at a country level on respective



Hand pump in a village in Kajiado District of the Rift Valley Province, Kenya. Irish Aid supported Concern Universal to work with two local organisations in Kajiado and Machakos districts - the Makutano Community Development Association and the Maa AIDS Awareness Programme – to provide clean reliable water supplies and promote appropriate sanitation and hygiene practices.

country strategies and for exchanging views on relevant policy issues at a country level. There will be a concerted effort to focus dialogue on strategic issues linked to the poverty reduction plans of the host country. This dialogue will help to improve coherence between the country strategy plans of Irish Aid and of NGO partners.

The missions will provide direct support to civil society in the host country in keeping with the objectives, principles and strategies outlined above. The management burden on the mission should be limited by avoiding administering numerous grants; opportunities to work through intermediaries or pooled fund arrangements should be proactively explored and developed.

Other Divisions in the Department of Foreign Affairs

Other divisions of the Department have a role in advising and providing guidance to Civil Society Section on foreign policy issues which may arise in the course of its work, particularly Political Division in relation to human rights questions. Officials from various divisions will continue to be invited to sit on steering and funding committees, as appropriate, and to contribute to the appraisal of proposals under consideration for funding by Irish Aid.

4.2 Risk Management

There are a number of risks for Irish Aid attached to supporting civil society; these include weak capacity within some civil society organisations leading to poor development outcomes and lack of accountability for public funds; increased competition for funds leading to reduced cooperation between civil society organisations; proliferation of civil society organisations wishing to engage in development work without adequate expertise or basis; and tensions between partner governments and Irish Aid where support to civil society in country leads to a critique of government policy.

There are also risks for civil society attached to receiving increased support from Irish Aid. These include over-dependence on government funding and a decrease in proportionate contributions from the (Irish) public and distortion of the civil society agenda as a result of donor funding.

These risks are flagged in this policy and will need to be managed at headquarters level through strong appraisal and monitoring mechanisms and an open and frank dialogue with partner organisations. This dialogue

is already frequent and occurs at a number of levels between Irish civil society organisations and Department officials and at a political level. Irish Aid will monitor carefully its overall contribution to any single organisation and set and review limits through funding guidelines.

There are risks at country level also. They will be managed through strong appraisal and monitoring mechanisms, the development of joint funding and management mechanisms with other donor partners in consultation with civil society in-country, and a focus on strengthening civil society as an institution.

4.3 Performance Management

It will be important to manage and measure the performance of the civil society policy. In the spirit of partnership, we will work with partners to define an appropriate monitoring framework and indicators. This work will involve both the partners in Ireland and those in the field.

Current monitoring systems will be kept under review.

The mechanisms for implementing this policy include policy dialogue across the range of Irish Aid partnerships and funding mechanisms at headquarters and at country level. All mechanisms should be reviewed to assess their success in contributing to the implementation of the policy and to Irish Aid's broad policy goals. These reviews should be completed by 2012.

Abbreviations

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
CSF	Civil Society Fund
EU	European Union
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICMPS	In-Country Microprojects Scheme
MAPS	Multi Annual Programme Scheme
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
SWAP	Sector Wide Approach
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
UN	United Nations
WTO	World Trade Organisation

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