

# Programme of Strategic Cooperation between Irish Aid and Higher Education and Research Institutes 2007-2011



**Irish Aid**

Department of Foreign Affairs  
An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha

Front cover: South Africa, Johannesburg: Man in a literacy class  
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## Introduction

**‘Collaboration with the higher education sector is important not just in the context of the next few years, as Ireland expands its programme, but also in the longer term. We value linkages developed with higher education and research institutes and we are committed to deepening the level of engagement.’**

*Government of Ireland White Paper on Irish Aid (2006)*

Irish Aid is the official development assistance programme of the Irish Government. The recently launched White Paper on Irish Aid identifies the reduction of poverty, vulnerability and increased opportunity as the overarching objective of the programme. It also reiterates the central importance of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in informing Ireland’s approach to development.

There is greater recognition of the potential of the higher education and research sectors in developing countries to contribute to achieving the MDGs. However it is also recognised that the capacity within the sector needs to be considerably strengthened if it is to be able to fulfil this potential.

Global and development issues have become integral to many Irish higher education academic and research programmes. The Government’s White Paper sets out an ambitious and forward looking programme outlining Ireland’s contribution to international efforts to combat poverty. The successful implementation of the programme will require not only increased financial resources but also the establishment of new partnerships with a wide range of sectors including the academic and research community.

There are well established linkages between many higher education and research institutes in Ireland and similar institutions in developing countries, many of which are supported by Irish Aid. Irish Aid has developed strong linkages with the sector and is now committed to deepening its engagement by introducing a new programme of strategic co-operation. The programme will be structured to more directly contribute to the achievement of Irish Aid’s objectives. This is particularly important in light of the expanding Irish Aid programme. The proposed programme of cooperation is intended to complement the extensive range of activities, implemented in cooperation with Irish higher education and research institutes, already funded by Irish Aid.

The programme will promote linkages and cooperation between higher education and research institutions in countries supported by Irish Aid and in Ireland with the objectives of institutional collaboration for knowledge generation, knowledge exchange and mutual learning. The overall aim of such support is to increase the capacity of southern institutions<sup>1</sup> to make an effective contribution to poverty reduction. Irish Aid believes that higher education institutions in Ireland have an important role to play in this process and will be an important conduit for Irish Aid support to the sector. However Irish Aid also recognises that the capacity of the sector in Ireland needs to be strengthened in order to be able to respond to this agenda. Therefore in the initial phase of the programme (2007-11) there will be a more concentrated focus on capacity building of the higher education sector in Ireland.

This programme document sets out the framework and parameters in which the new programme will operate. It is designed to be fully coherent with other funding/research schemes financed by the Irish Government. There will be a strong focus on thematic priority areas of relevance to Irish Aid. While a key objective is the capacity strengthening

<sup>1</sup> The term ‘southern institutions’ refers to institutions in developing countries.

in countries where Irish Aid works, the programme is based on a collaborative approach between Irish Aid and participating higher education and research institutions in Ireland and in developing countries. A particular feature of this programme is that it will foster collaboration between institutions in Ireland on an all-island basis. It is proposed that the programme will be implemented, on an incremental basis, over a five-year period beginning in 2007.

Irish Aid will work in partnership with the Higher Education Authority (HEA) which will be responsible for the implementation of the programme. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the two agencies provides a framework for cooperation and collaboration. The proposed collaboration is of mutual benefit to both organisations, enabling the higher education sector to develop an interest in development cooperation and Irish Aid to promote research and its strategic priorities through Irish higher education institutions and research institutes.

# Section One: Context and Rationale

## 1.1 Background

The development of this programme has been informed by the lessons learnt from existing cooperation between Irish Aid and the higher education sector in Ireland in addition to experiences from the research programme of the Advisory Board for Irish Aid. It also takes account of the findings of a specific study commissioned by Irish Aid which appraised the institutional arrangements that exist between official aid programmes and the higher education sector in other OECD countries<sup>2</sup>. Consultations were also held with the Department of Education and Science and the Higher Education Authority (HEA)<sup>3</sup>.

Higher education institutions in Ireland have also expressed interest in increased engagement in the area of development cooperation and have been actively exploring opportunities for increased collaboration with Irish Aid<sup>4</sup>. A number of meetings and seminars have been organised by the sector. A significant number of submissions from higher education and other institutions were forwarded to the Department of Foreign Affairs in advance of the preparation of the White Paper on Irish Aid.

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2 Countries which were the focus of this study included the UK, Denmark, Sweden, Norway and the Netherlands.

3 The Higher Education is the statutory planning and development body for higher education and research in Ireland, in respect of which it advises the Government and the Minister for Education and Science. It is responsible for the allocation of Exchequer funding to the universities and to other institutions designated under the Act and for the management of the Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions (PRTLII).

4 The Council of Universities Ireland, a cross-border body comprising the presidents of the nine universities on the island of Ireland, carried out a survey of existing links with third-level colleges in Ireland and those in the developing world.

## 1.2 Role of Higher Education and Research in Poverty Reduction

It is increasingly recognised that a well-functioning higher education system is a necessary condition for economic and social development. The sector is seen as a key organ in strengthening governance, research generation and knowledge development and creating space for independent analysis of development issues. In addition the development of higher education is crucial to the overall development of education systems. These concerns are reflected in the increased focus by the international community on institutional development and research in the higher education sector. There is also a recognition of the need to build links between these two areas<sup>5</sup>.

However it is also recognised that the sector needs to considerably strengthen its capacity in order to make an effective contribution to poverty reduction. Inter-institutional linkages and research cooperation between higher education institutions in developed and developing countries is one effective mechanism to build such capacity. A formal consultation was convened to facilitate input by representatives of higher education and research institutions in Ireland, into the content of the strategy.

## 1.3 Current Engagement by Higher Education and Research Institutes in Ireland with International Development

Higher education and research institutes represent a hugely important and influential sector in Ireland.

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5 Leen, M. (2005) Mapping potential for structured engagement by Irish Aid with higher education institutes in Ireland

These institutions are important in advancing adult learning, in engaging on issues of key domestic and international significance, and in conducting research which is relevant to the needs of private and public sector institutions.

The strong interest in international development is reflected in the increased availability of dedicated post-graduate courses in development or development-related studies in a number of Irish universities and colleges.

A large number of Irish institutions have well-established direct links and partnerships with universities, teacher training colleges, research institutes and research networks in developing countries. The range of activities includes accreditation and capacity building, joint research, module development and delivery and staff exchanges.

There is also a very considerable level of interest by students and student bodies in issues relating to international development. This is reflected in high participation in relevant under- and post-graduate studies, the organisation of awareness-raising events, advocacy campaigns, and the participation of students in many international volunteering programmes.

However while there are some examples of cross-departmental, inter-varsity and North/South cooperation in Ireland, in general, departments and institutions can work in isolation from one another and there are few examples of networking and cross-institutional collaboration in the development studies area<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> A recent initiative by the Council of Universities Ireland to identify areas for greater cooperation could provide an opportunity to redress this situation.

## 1.4 Existing Relationships between Irish Aid and Higher Education and Research Institutes

Irish Aid recognises and values the contribution of the sector to development and has developed a number of links and relationships with many higher education and research institutions in Ireland and in partner countries. In 2005, Irish Aid funding for the higher education sector in Ireland through various programmes amounted to approximately €4 million. The various mechanisms and funding schemes are listed below.

### Fellowships and Training Programmes

Irish Aid has made a significant investment in further education and training aimed at capacity building of policy makers and development practitioners in its partner countries in Africa through the Irish Aid Fellowship and Training Programme. The programme is implemented in partnership with the Irish Council for Overseas Students (ICOS) and Kimmage Development Studies Centre. Successful applicants are enrolled on a wide range of post-graduate diploma and degree courses in third-level colleges in Ireland.

### Development Education

The Development Education Unit of Irish Aid supports higher education institutions to mainstream development education into professional under-graduate and post-graduate courses. The Development and Intercultural Education (DICE) project for initial primary teacher education, which brings together the five teacher training colleges, is one example of an innovative approach in this area. Irish Aid also sponsors a bi-annual Third-Level conference on development and development education.

### Framework Partnership Agreements

A number of Framework Partnership Agreements have been instituted with relevant research and third-level organisations aimed at meeting specific programme needs in the health sector. A programme of cooperation with the Health Research Board aims at generating research evidence which is directly related to Irish Aid's policy priorities in this sector. It also contributes to building research capacity in developing countries as well as strengthening the capacity of the research community in Ireland to engage in health research which has a global significance.

### Programme Countries

As part of its overall programme of support at country level, Irish Aid funds a number of institutions which have linkages with Irish higher education institutions primarily in the areas of research, teaching training and capacity building. Support to the higher education sector in some Irish Aid programme countries is channelled through Ministries of Education as part of a sector-wide approach in education.

### Civil Society Funding

Irish Aid is also supporting a number of development interventions by Irish third-level institutions in developing countries, under the present funding schemes run by Civil Society Section, in the areas of human rights and the social sector.

### Internships

Irish Aid has an agreement with a number of Irish higher education institutes that facilitates the placement of internships, for periods of 3-4 months in each case. Plans are currently underway for a significant expansion of this scheme.

### The Advisory Board for Irish Aid

The Advisory Board for Irish Aid has a particular responsibility in contracting research which is relevant to the policy objectives of the Irish

Aid programme<sup>7</sup>. In implementing this research programme the Advisory Board has developed a number of important institutional links with third-level bodies in Ireland and in Irish Aid programme countries.

## 1.5 Conclusion

It is evident that there is a substantial degree of interest among Irish higher education and research institutions in the field of development cooperation. Many of them are engaged in inter-institutional linkages with similar institutes in developing countries. Some of these linkages are supported by Irish Aid through a variety of programming instruments.

Irish Aid now proposes to increase its support for the higher education and research sector through a more strategic programme of cooperation aligned with its overall poverty reduction objective. While a key objective of the programme is to increase the capacity of southern institutions to make an effective contribution to poverty reduction, the programme will provide a number of clear gains for Irish Aid and for the higher education sector in Ireland.

### Gains for Irish Aid

- Linking into, and strengthening the development of, an additional and influential constituency for overseas development assistance (ODA).
- Opportunity to promote research and academic capacity on issues of particular interest to Irish Aid arising from its particular focus on the poor and its partnership approach to development.
- Development of a valuable pool of knowledge and expertise in Ireland that can be drawn on for advocacy, policy development and research.

<sup>7</sup> Thematic areas of particular interest to the Advisory Board include Policy Coherence; Civil Society; Governance and Health



### **Gains for Irish Aid and the Irish Higher Education sector**

- Strengthening capacity of third-level institutions in areas of key relevance to international development and in particular to the needs and focus of the Irish Aid programme.
- Opportunity to strengthen the visibility of issues relating to international development, and the Irish Aid programme, in third-level courses and training.

### **Gains for the Irish Higher Education sector**

- Strengthening coherence with public sector needs by helping to align institutional and departmental priorities, research interests and personnel competencies with Irish Government foreign policy objectives.
- Opportunity to learn from, influence, and access financial resources from Irish Aid.
- Opportunity for establishing and consolidating linkages with other third-level institutions in developing countries on shared priority themes.
- Opportunity to build academic and professional expertise in respect of development policy and practice in developing countries.

### **Gains for the Higher Education sector in Partner Countries**

- Opportunity to build effective North-South partnerships around priority themes, e.g. in health training and research.
- Enhanced institutional, training and research capacity linked to a greater capacity to contribute to development policy and practice both at domestic level and internationally.
- Greater integration of institutional development and fellowship programmes, so as to best

address the needs of governments, institutes and individuals in the field of higher education.

- Opportunity to build academic and professional expertise in respect of development policy and practice.

Irish Aid believes that higher education institutions in Ireland have an important role to play in building capacity of the higher education sector in developing countries and sees them as important conduits for Irish Aid support to the sector. However the conclusions of a recent stock-take, commissioned by Irish Aid, point to limited capacity within Irish institutions to undertake such a role. The study found that while there is a wide range of links between Irish Aid and the third-level sector in Ireland, the current interaction tends to be informal and not systematic. Current linkages generally reflect the interest and skills of individuals working in universities and colleges rather than formal relationships with these institutions. The link with the poverty reduction focus of Irish Aid and developing countries is not always evident.

In light of these findings, the new programme will have a strong focus on capacity building in the higher education sector in Ireland during the initial phase 2007-11. A focus on this capacity building will therefore be required of those applications supported under this strategy. Applicants should seek to demonstrate capacity strengthening through a medium-term effort to invest in people, systems and knowledge building in Irish higher education institutions. Institutions should also seek to demonstrate cooperation within and across institutions and externally with their proposed project partners, in particular partners in the South; strengthen academic leadership; and create sustainable centres of expertise with the objective of longer-term delivery in research, teaching, innovation and mutual learning.

The programme will complement existing funding schemes, the particular remit and focus of the programmes supported through the Advisory Board

for Irish Aid, the institutional arrangements that pertain in Irish Aid as well as its management and technical capacity. It will strongly correlate with the objectives of the Irish Aid programme and reflect a shared commitment to performance and agreed outcomes. It will draw upon the expertise and capacity of the Higher Education Authority for oversight and management.

The strategy presents an opportunity for Irish Aid to strengthen coherence across its funding schemes for higher education and research institutes in Ireland.

## Section Two: Programme of Strategic Cooperation

### 2.1 Programme Parameters

In developing this programme of strategic cooperation Irish Aid is committed to strengthening its engagement with Irish higher education and research institutes in the area of international development and to facilitating the strengthening of capacity of similar institutions in partner countries<sup>8</sup>. The new programme will build on existing structures of cooperation and will bring a greater degree of alignment with the overall objectives of, and aid instruments used by the Irish Aid programme. In doing so it offers opportunities and benefits for both Irish Aid and participating institutions in Ireland and in developing countries.

In formulating this programme the following considerations were taken into account:

- The need for stronger links between the work of higher education institutions and the objectives and priorities of the Irish Aid programme.
- The need for greater coherence and consistency in Irish Aid's support to, and engagement with, higher education and research institutes in Ireland.
- The need to invest in the capacity strengthening of Irish institutions, particularly in the initial stages of the implementation of this programme.
- The need to facilitate, but not replace, an investment by higher education institutions themselves in development cooperation.
- The need to facilitate the establishment and consolidation of cooperation arrangements within and between higher education and other relevant research institutions in Ireland and in countries where Irish Aid is working.

- The need to strengthen the institutional base in Ireland for a longer-term structured collaboration between the Irish Aid programme and higher education institutes and research institutes.

### 2.2 Aim and Objectives

The overall aim of this programme is to support Irish Aid's mission in reducing poverty through a programme of strategic cooperation with higher education and research institutes in Ireland and in partner countries.

The objectives are:

1. To facilitate the *establishment of collaborative partnerships* within and between higher education institutions and research institutes in Ireland and in countries benefiting from Irish Aid support.
2. To support the *realisation of Irish Aid's policy objectives* in the following areas which are of strategic relevance to the objectives of the Irish Aid programme:
  - Poverty and disadvantage
  - Pro-poor economic growth
  - Health
  - Education
  - Food and livelihood security
  - Gender equality
  - Good governance
  - HIV/AIDS
  - The environment.
3. To support the *realisation of Irish Aid's policy objectives* through *capacity building of higher education and research institutions*.

<sup>8</sup> While applications will not be expected to be exclusively focused on Irish Aid programme countries the programme will seek to have maximum coherence with Irish Aid priority areas of engagement. Africa is the principal geographic focus for Irish Aid including six of Irish Aid's programme countries.

## 2.3 Key Principles

The implementation of the programme will be underpinned by the following key principles.

### Poverty Focus

Programme proposals submitted under this scheme need to be fully consistent with the overarching poverty reduction goal of Irish Aid and consistent with the thematic priorities identified in this strategic framework<sup>9</sup>. In addition, proposals will be expected to demonstrate how a commitment to Irish Aid's priority issues of **gender equality, HIV/AIDS, environmental sustainability and good governance** are appropriately mainstreamed across planned activities.

### Capacity Strengthening

All activities supported within the framework of this programme are expected to contribute to the strengthening of capacity. Building capacity can relate to enhancing the capacity of institutions to conduct research in-country; promoting research training; capacitating local researchers to access international research; facilitating linkages with international research institutes and initiatives and enabling appropriate peer review processes which rely on sound collaboration amongst countries north and south. In the first instance there will be a particular focus on building the capacity of participating institutions in Ireland to deliver on this programme<sup>10</sup>. However, its success will ultimately be judged by the extent that capacity is strengthened in participating institutions in the south. It is anticipated that the programme could also serve to augment the technical capacity of Irish Aid.

### Partnership

A strong emphasis will be placed on institutional collaboration for knowledge generation, knowledge exchange and mutual learning. Particular emphasis will be placed on structures to facilitate effective

partnership – across participating institutions in Ireland; within participating institutions; between participating institutions in Ireland and institutions in countries benefiting from Irish Aid support and between participating institutions and Irish Aid. Preference will be given to proposals from consortia of institutions which include at least one partner institution in a country benefiting from Irish Aid support. Proposals will need to demonstrate evidence of partnership agreements or Memoranda of Understanding, as appropriate.

### Flexibility

In recognition of the dynamic context within which development cooperation programmes are planned and implemented, proposals considered for funding approval will need to demonstrate that they can deliver agreed outputs and also respond flexibly to some emerging needs.

### Performance

This scheme has been developed with a particular emphasis on ensuring performance. Drawing on the objectives and principles of this strategy, benchmarks will be developed to assist in the appraisal of proposals and in the subsequent assessment of performance. A failure to meet agreed performance expectations will lead to a review of cooperation arrangements.

### Innovation

The programme encourages innovative approaches to increasing partner-country access to research through effective dissemination mechanisms.

## 2.4 Anticipated Programme Outputs

The following outputs are envisaged for the programme as a whole. It is expected that the activities carried out within the specific programmes of participating institutions will contribute to a number of the outputs identified.

<sup>9</sup> See Section 3

<sup>10</sup> This could include the funding of doctoral and post-doctoral posts linked to the objectives of the research of the project.

### **2.4.1 Undertaking of collaborative research between participating institutions**

Irish Aid is committed to supporting high quality research that contributes to evidence-based national development policies and programmes that can improve the lives of the poorest. It is keen to promote international partnerships in policy-relevant research involving higher education and research institutions both in Ireland and in partner countries. The programme will facilitate the alignment of academic programmes and research interests in higher education and research institutes with national partner government policies and objectives. Support will be directed towards increasing research capacity in developing countries, conducting high quality research and research dissemination. Particular consideration will be given to proposals which prioritise applied research which is linked to the objectives of country-specific plans for reducing poverty.

### **2.4.2 Enhanced quality of teaching and learning in participating institutions**

Accelerating the education, training and upskilling of large numbers of people in developing countries is required in order to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Ireland has a particular commitment to working with key institutions in partner countries to strengthen the quality of teaching and learning and to learn from them how to respond to country-specific capacity constraints. Of particular interest from an Irish perspective would be to explore the potential value of developing appropriate Information Communication Technology (ICT) systems and approaches that can provide innovative solutions to meet some of these demands. Recognition of the links and common interests and approaches can inform approaches to teaching and learning in a range of under-graduate and post-graduate courses in Ireland and in developing countries. Support will be directed towards joint educational and training programmes that are aimed at providing sustainable solutions and which build the capacity

of partner institutions. Candidate programmes will need to facilitate the design and delivery of relevant modules or courses in under- and post-graduate training programmes preferably offered on a collaborative basis by participating institutions.

### **2.4.3 Establishment of, and participation in, cross-institutional networks**

Irish Aid is strongly committed to better coordination of programmes supported in order to increase the effectiveness and impact of development cooperation. This programme should facilitate increased networking between participant and partner organisations to work on issues of common interest and related to Irish Aid objectives. The programme will facilitate the establishment or further development of cross-institutional networks that facilitate communication, knowledge exchange, advocacy and collaborative research between participant institutions. The functioning of these networks should be related to specific and measurable benefits which are consistent with the thematic focus of this strategy outlined in Section 3.

### **2.4.4 Development of specialist knowledge and research expertise which is accessible to the Irish Aid programme.**

The need for specialist knowledge for the planning and oversight of development cooperation programmes is well recognised by Irish Aid. It is anticipated that the implementation of this programme will contribute to the strengthening of specialist expertise in thematic areas relevant to the Irish Aid programme. This could then be accessible to Irish Aid and support in-house capacity in the following areas: policy analysis and development; programme appraisal; monitoring and evaluation; preparation of specialist publications and issues papers; representation at international conferences; statistical analysis and interpretation; tendering for specialist consultancy assignments.

#### 2.4.5 Increased awareness and critical engagement by the Irish public in the Irish Aid programme

Continued support for and engagement with development cooperation by the Irish public is important particularly in the context of an expanded aid programme. Through the range of activities undertaken within this programme it is expected that participating institutions in Ireland will contribute to increased public understanding and knowledge of the Irish Aid programme.

Applications are encouraged for initiatives which lead to the surveying and analysis of public attitudes to development cooperation; provide information about Ireland's commitment to international development that is accessible to different segments of Irish society; and facilitate an engagement of a broader cross-section of Irish society in public discourse in relation to the focus and activities of the Irish Aid Programme.

### 2.5 Eligible Institutions

Institutions eligible for financial support under this scheme include providers of higher education as well as research institutes<sup>11</sup> in Ireland and in countries benefiting from Irish Aid support. Other key partners could include southern and northern NGOs. A particular feature of this programme is that it will foster collaboration between institutions in Ireland on an all-island basis. For the purposes of administration of the scheme, applications for funding must be submitted by a participating recognised higher education institution<sup>12</sup> based inside the State, acting as the lead institution for the proposed project. This institution will take responsibility for reporting and overall financial accountability and communication with the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and Irish Aid.

11 Where Irish research institutions have established links with international research and development institutes they will be eligible for inclusion in the scheme.

12 As outlined in the current *call for proposals*.

### 2.6 Programme Inputs

Lead agencies will be expected to show evidence of a commitment to development cooperation in their institutional strategies and charters. They will also be expected to demonstrate a commitment to allocate at least 30% of their own costs to the programme<sup>13</sup>.

Irish Aid will allocate financing, up to a maximum of €12.5 million over 5 years to the programme. Staff from relevant sections of Irish Aid will input into the appraisal process and will participate in the programme consultation structures, managed by the Higher Education Authority (HEA), as appropriate.

The Higher Education Authority (HEA) will have responsibility for the day-to-day management of the programme.

13 This can include staff-time and administration costs.

## Section Three: Focus of Programme of Cooperation

The overall aim of this programme is to support Irish Aid's mission in reducing poverty through a programme of strategic cooperation with higher education and research institutes in Ireland and in partner countries<sup>14</sup>. The thematic and cross-sectoral priorities identified below are intended to guide the selection of areas for strategic engagement to be funded under the programme<sup>15</sup>. It is acknowledged however that the approach adopted by individual institutions will vary according to the interests and needs identified. Therefore the programme approach is not prescriptive and is intended to facilitate a range of approaches. For example, applicants could focus on an exploration of these thematic priorities from the perspective of international development processes and/or different aid delivery instruments. Alternatively applicants could integrate an appropriate cross-sectoral perspective into the thematic areas they wish to focus on. In summary, programme proposals may chose to focus on;

- one or more specific thematic areas as identified below
- thematic area(s) related to cross-sectoral priorities (see below)
- sectoral/thematic areas related to development processes and/or aid delivery instruments.

<sup>14</sup> While applications will not be expected to be exclusively focused on Irish Aid programme countries the programme will seek to have maximum coherence with Irish Aid priority areas of engagement. Africa is the principal geographic focus for Irish Aid including six of Irish Aid's programme countries.

<sup>15</sup> The White Paper on Irish Aid and the published sectoral/ cross-cutting policies of Irish Aid are available from Irish Aid.

### Thematic Priorities

#### 3.1 Poverty and Disadvantage

Irish Aid recognises that poverty is both complex and multidimensional. It is about the inability of people to meet economic, social and other standards of well-being, such as basic needs like health, education, nutrition, water and sanitation and shelter. It is also about the absence of fundamental human rights, about being disempowered, feeling socially excluded, and being unable to meaningfully participate in a community. And it is also about vulnerability and insecurity, and the inability to withstand economic and external shocks such as drought, natural disasters, food shortages, illness, unemployment and conflict. Poverty is about being deprived of basic capabilities or freedoms, with the result that poor people suffer premature mortality, malnutrition, persistent morbidity and illiteracy.

In order to better respond to the needs of the poor in countries which are supported by Irish Aid there is a particular interest in generating quality analysis which can inform programmatic choices in the following areas:

- Measuring poverty and strengthening the quality of statistical data used for poverty assessments
- National development frameworks and the extent that they respond to the needs of the poor
- Poverty and vulnerability - how to ensure the poorest benefit from development cooperation
- Poverty and participation – including the voice of the poor in policy development and implementation.

## 3.2 Pro-poor Economic Growth

Economic growth is an essential requirement and often the major contributory factor in reducing poverty. But economic growth alone is not a panacea. Rapid and sustained poverty reduction requires pro-poor growth - a pattern and pace of growth that increases the ability of poor men and women to participate in, contribute to and benefit from growth. Policies need to promote both the pace and pattern of economic growth or in other words, the extent to which the poor participate in growth as both agents and beneficiaries.

Irish Aid is committed to having a better understanding of:

- the consequences of economic growth on the poor and marginalised
- the relationship between income distributional changes and poverty reduction
- the poverty impacts of economic growth
- the linkages between poverty and the environment factors that are the major determinants of economic growth.

## 3.3 Health

In many low-income countries health status indicators have either deteriorated or failed to improve over the past ten years. The poor bear the highest burden of sickness and ill-health and have the least access to health services.

Irish Aid is interested in proposals which can support the implementation of the objectives outlined in its health policy. These are:

- to address the determinants of ill-health

- to strengthen health systems to serve the poor more effectively
- to promote health strategies that meet the needs of the poor and marginalised and to contribute to an effective international response to health needs of the poor
- to ensure a coherent approach to health improvement in all Irish Aid's work.

## 3.4 Education

Despite the many gains in education over the past decade, especially in increased enrolments, over one hundred million children are still out of school and more than 770 million adults worldwide, the majority women, lack basic literacy skills.

Irish Aid is interested in proposals which can support the implementation of the objectives outlined in its policy on basic education. These are:

- to accelerate progress towards educational access and equity
- to promote significant improvements in the quality of basic education
- to strengthen national-led planning and implementation systems for sustainable education service delivery.

## 3.5 Food and Livelihood Security

Many regions in the world, particularly in the Horn of Africa, are vulnerable each year to food scarcity. Millions of people are permanently vulnerable to famine, largely because of chronic poverty. Today, over 852 million people, including 300 million children, do not get enough food to lead a healthy and active life, making hunger and malnutrition the number one risk to health worldwide.



Irish Aid is interested in proposals which can support its approach to food and livelihood security. These include:

- the importance of having predictable supplies and adequate reserves of food
- strengthening agricultural productivity
- the links between HIV/AIDS, environmental degradation and food insecurity
- social protection
- improving the capability of poor people to become food secure.

### 3.6 Gender Equality\*

The international recognition of the rights of women has not been translated into practice on the ground. Irish Aid recognises that sustainable development is only attainable when the needs and interests of both men and women are fully recognised. Gender inequality primarily affects women; they experience poverty differently.

Irish Aid is interested in proposals which can support the implementation of the objectives outlined in its policy on gender equality. These are:

- the advancement of equal rights for women and men
- the elimination of gender inequalities in access to, control of and benefit from resources and services
- support for women's equal participation with men in political and economic decision making.

### 3.7 Good Governance\*

Good governance is a process where universally accepted rights governing the behaviour of state and non-state actors and institutions are respected, enhanced and applied throughout a society. Addressing good governance is critical to reducing poverty and achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The primary responsibility for achieving the MDGs lies with governments.

Irish Aid is interested in proposals which can support the implementation of the objectives outlined in its support for good governance. Priorities for Irish Aid include:

- the facilitation of an enabling environment for good governance
- the promotion of a democratic culture
- the development of effective institutions for service delivery
- the strengthening of civil society.

### 3.8 HIV/AIDS\*

HIV and AIDS have a devastating effect on individuals, families and communities and it also has a profound effect on the social and economic development of countries most affected by the epidemic. Poverty, under-development and illiteracy increase the vulnerability to HIV infection and AIDS which in turn exacerbates poverty.

Irish Aid is interested in proposals which can support the implementation of the objectives outlined in its HIV/AIDS strategy. A comprehensive response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic is central to Irish Aid's overall policy objective of poverty reduction. Irish Aid aims to support the prevention of HIV/AIDS and the reduction of its impact on developing countries. The policy objectives reflect the cross-cutting nature of HIV/AIDS and the need to:

- adopt a broad based development response and include the mainstreaming of HIV/AIDS into all development programmes
- support specific programmes that mitigate and impact on the progress of the pandemic
- strengthen institutional capacity of Irish Aid to address the pandemic.

\* These four issues cut across and inform all of the work of Irish Aid: Gender, Environment, HIV/AIDS and Governance. They are taken into account in the planning, implementation and evaluation of all of the interventions by Irish Aid. Applications could consider these cross-sectoral issues as thematic priorities in their own right. They may also take them into account, as appropriate, in dealing with the other thematic areas.

### 3.9 The Environment\*

The environment plays a key role in assuring the livelihoods and well-being of the majority of the world's poor men and women. However, disregard for the environment impacts more negatively on the poor and the most vulnerable members of society. The aim of Irish Aid is to promote environmentally sustainable development that is consistent with the economic, social and environmental needs and priorities of people in developing countries and contributes to poverty reduction.

Irish Aid is interested in proposals which can support the implementation of the objectives outlined in its policy on the environment. These include:

- raising awareness of the links between environmental sustainability and poverty reduction
- integrating the principles of sustainable development into Irish Aid policies and programmes in order to ensure environmental sustainability
- engaging with key multilateral environmental agreements and agencies
- assisting developing countries to prepare for and adapt to changing environmental conditions while taking action to reduce negative impacts on the most vulnerable members of society.

## Section Four: Management

### 4.1 Management and Oversight

The Public Information and Development Education Section of Irish Aid will be responsible for the oversight of the programme. Irish Aid will provide technical input and participate in the assessment of applications for funding. Irish Aid will monitor the performance of the programme over its lifetime and may adjust certain aspects of the programme as deemed appropriate. A focal person within Irish Aid will be appointed to participate in the structured dialogue envisaged as part of the programme.

#### Programme Implementation

Implementation of the programme will be the responsibility of the Higher Education Authority (HEA) which will be responsible for:

- The provision of relevant information to participating institutions
- Ongoing communication and liaison with participating institutions and Irish Aid
- Issuing the calls for proposals including national advertising
- Managing the appraisal process including the sourcing of an appropriate peer review panel (including international representatives)
- Management and administration of the allocation of funding
- Oversight and monitoring of grant funds
- Organisation of the annual workshops
- Development of a reporting and monitoring system in liaison with Irish Aid
- Providing annual reports to Irish Aid.

### 4.2 Application Process

#### 4.2.1 Programmatic approach

Participating organisations may submit proposals which normally will be for a minimum of three years and a maximum of five years. This is in recognition that it will take time to build effective partnerships and to build capacity. An incremental approach is recommended. Proposals should be strategic in approach and the various activities to be carried out should contribute to the programme's aim and objectives. Only one application from each lead agency will be eligible for consideration for funding in each round. However individual departments within the lead agency can collaborate as partners in other applications in cases where another institution is taking the lead. Applications should outline a strategic approach and demonstrate how the component elements or departmental responses contribute to the overall stated institutional objective outlined in the proposal.

Application guidelines are available to support organisations in the development of their proposals.

#### 4.2.2 Flexibility

In recognition of the dynamic context within which development cooperation programmes are planned and implemented, proposals considered for funding approval will need to demonstrate that they can deliver agreed outputs and also respond flexibly to emerging needs.

#### 4.2.3 Expressions of interest

A two-phased approach to applications is envisaged. A Call for Expression of Interest will invite eligible institutions to submit a concept note on the broad outline of their proposed programme. Following the approval of the concept note institutions will be requested to submit the detailed

application with an outline work plan and budget for detailed appraisal.

#### 4.2.4 Appraisal

The following criteria will be applied in the assessment of proposals:

- Consistency with Irish Aid's thematic priorities and cross-cutting issues
- Strategic approach and quality and internal consistency of proposal
- Management and implementation capacity of participating institutions including internal coordinating structures as appropriate
- Evidence of contribution by participating institutions
- Cost effectiveness
- Commitment to monitoring and review
- Commitment to development cooperation in institutional charters and strategies
- Evidence of sustainability of proposal's activities
- Quality of partnership arrangements with partner country institutions.

#### 4.2.5 Approval process

An Appraisal Committee comprising representatives from Irish Aid, and external experts, facilitated by the HEA, will assess the proposals. Following approval, it is proposed that a multi-year framework agreement will be agreed between the HEA and the successful applicant.

#### 4.2.6 Networking grants

In addition to the main grants to be funded under this scheme it is proposed to award a small number of networking grants which will be managed by the HEA. These grants will allow potential partners travel with a view to developing relationships on prospective programmes of strategic cooperation and then submit collaborative grant applications such as those invited under this scheme. There will be a limit of €10,000 per application.

### 4.3 Structured Dialogue

#### 4.3.1 Reporting, regular meetings and dialogue

Successful applicants will be expected to submit an annual report and accounts to the HEA, together with an outline work plan for the following year. **As part of this process** the progress report, together with annual work plans, will be presented and discussed with Irish Aid. Successful applicants may be expected to liaise with a designated focal person in Irish Aid at agreed times.

### 4.4 Budget

The indicative budget for the programme is €12.5 million over five years. Programme duration can vary between three and five years. The maximum amount granted per application is €1.5 million.

In addition networking grants to a maximum amount of €10,000 will be awarded at intervals throughout the programme.

## 4.5 Monitoring and Review

Irish Aid is committed to fully reviewing the focus and outputs of the programme after a period of three years. The programme has been developed with a particular emphasis on ensuring performance. Drawing on the objectives and principles of this programme, benchmarks will be developed to assist in the appraisal of proposals and in the subsequent assessment of performance. A failure to meet agreed performance expectations will lead to a review of cooperation arrangements which could lead to a cessation of funding.

# Appendix

## Consultation Process

A consultation process on the proposed programme of strategic cooperation between Irish Aid and higher education and research institutes was undertaken. Written submissions were invited from all higher education institutions.

### Received Submissions from Higher Education Institutions

- Athlone IT
- Dublin City University
- Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology
- Kimmage DSC
- Letterkenny IT
- Marino Institute of Education
- Mary Immaculate College
- NUI Galway
- NUI Maynooth
- Royal College of Surgeons Ireland
- St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra
- Trinity College Dublin
- University College Cork
- University of Limerick
- Universities Ireland Africa Group

In addition, a consultation forum, facilitated by the Higher Education Authority, was held to which representatives from each higher education institution were invited.



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