

SUBMISSION BY COLUMBAN FATHERS TO IRISH AID WHITE PAPER REVIEW

Introduction

On behalf of the Columban Fathers, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Irish Aid for monies received over the past number of years for development projects run by the Columban Fathers in Chile, Pakistan, Peru and the Philippines. In November 2011 I had the opportunity, together with Peter McEvoy (Consultant) and Michael O'Sullivan, to visit both Chile and Peru on a Monitoring/Evaluation trip. It gave us the opportunity to see first hand the projects in both countries that have benefitted and are benefitting from Irish Aid money. I was particularly very impressed by each of the projects in Lima, Peru which are coordinated very professionally and with great transparency by Fr Ed O'Connell.

I quote from a recent e-mail that I had from Fr Ed which I feel is very pertinent to the White Paper Review. ***“ The big thing for Peru is that because of the economic upturn, because of mineral wealth, Peru figures as a strong economy and therefore some EU countries and Bill Gates are placing it outside the poverty zone. In theory if you take an average, given the very high wages of a minority and a growing middle class that do ok, means that the majority, some 50 to 60% would be considered poor at home and about 30% in extreme poverty. The trickle down theory does not work here in Peru as the rich do not share and there is not an adequate tax system and no support for those in poverty or extreme poverty. The Church, through the parishes, do an excellent job building up the capacity of the people to respond to their situation and often have schemes to help poor youngsters into Universities. Yet there are a mass of poor on the outskirts of Lima and in the Andes that need and greatly benefit from Irish Aid money and Aid from other EU countries so that they can reduce the effects of poverty and support the people in their efforts to work their way out of poverty.”***

Missionary Society of St Columban (Columban Fathers)

As a Missionary Society the work for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation are at the very core and heart of who we are and what we do. Reconciliation, Dialogue, upholding the dignity and the human rights of people, particularly the poor, are essential to who we are. The context of Columban Mission, particularly in Chile, Pakistan, Peru and the Philippines, in which we read the signs of the times in a world where there is a growing gap between rich and poor with particular consequences for women and minority groups; a world that is threatened by global warming and continuing environmental destruction; a world where mutual misunderstanding between Islam and ' the West' leads to fear, violence and war; a world of ever greater individualism, secularism, pluralism and alienation of young people.

As a Society we believe that the Irish Aid Programme must continue despite the recent recession. The money provided by Irish Aid facilitates people being helped to have control over their own lives and it enables civil society groups to grow and develop, ie, local ownership of development and aid programmes is essential.

1. Progress made since the last White Paper.

Has the Government been successful in implementing the commitments contained in the White Paper on Irish Aid?

1.1. The present White Paper review takes place against a radically altered economic context compared with that which pertained when the last White Paper was published in September 2006. In spite of a high level of support from the Irish taxpaying public towards development aid, the exchequer allocation for ODA has dropped by 27% since 2008, compared with an average percentage reduction of 9% across all government departments. Irish Aid, and its partner implementing agencies, have had a difficult time managing this cutback so as to minimise the adverse impact on the most vulnerable, while at the same time ensuring that aid quality and results are maintained and enhanced, in line with the commitments given at the High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness.

1.2. We hope that we are now emerging from this period of retrenchment, because what the aid programme now desperately needs is a period of consolidation and multi-annual predictability. Otherwise the damage to Ireland's international reputation which has already been sustained, as a result of the excesses of the Celtic Tiger period culminating in the 'Bail-out' of November 2010, will be compounded, and disproportionate suffering will be caused to so many of the poor and destitute throughout the developing world, who depend on us to be reliable partners with them in creating a better quality of life.

1.3. It is therefore all the more timely and important that the present public consultation exercise around the White Paper Review is taking place, and that it is actively promoting public engagement with, and critique of, our development aid programme and its modalities of delivery.

1.4. While the 0.7% of GDI to ODA is somewhat off target, Ireland can be still proud of the successes and accomplishments which have resulted from its commitment to supporting the poorest of the poor of our world. Much has been accomplished but also much remains to be done. We would still hope that 0.7% of GDI will be reached. What we do not want to see are further reductions.

2. Changing Context

What are the implications of the changes in the global and domestic context for the Government's aid programme in the future and how will these affect current policies?

2.1. Looking back over the past 5 years, one policy initiative which we particularly welcome is the Report of the Hunger Task Force, and the follow up action taken by Irish Aid, by development NGOs, and by missionary organisations to place a renewed emphasis on sustainable livelihoods as a lynchpin of sustainable development.

2.2. The Irish Aid programme has been characterized by many positive features, including:

- ✓ An over-arching emphasis on poverty reduction and strong pro-poor targeting of aid;
- ✓ Giving concrete expression to a development paradigm which is increasingly Southern led and promoting greater Southern ownership;
- ✓ Recognition that civil society organisations (CSOs) play a vital role in enabling people to claim their rights, in promoting rights-based approaches, in shaping development policies and partnerships, and in overseeing their implementation.

These principles should now also be incorporated into the revised White Paper, thereby underlining our adherence not just to good development practice, but beyond that to a range of international commitments to which we have signed up; for example - human rights, decent work, gender equality, environmental sustainability, combating human trafficking, and social inclusion of persons with disability.

2.3 **Climate Change and Global Warming** are key issues that need to be addressed. The consequences of climate change and global warming will inevitably affect many more people in the developing world in the years ahead. It will influence where a sizable quantity of Irish Aid monies will be spent in future years. Therefore a greater level of commitment is needed at the level of governments and government departments in addressing the phenomenon of climate change if the positive results of aid are to be maintained.

3. Key Issues

How should the Government respond to the key issues of hunger, fragility, climate change, basic needs, governance, human rights and gender equality? Are there other issues? Given the limited resources and the need to focus on these, which issues should the Government prioritise in its future aid programming?

3.1. One important dimension which has **not** been sufficiently to the fore of our aid programme has been the area of **conflict resolution, stabilization of fragile states, and sustainable peace-building**. It was good to see some recognition of this as a priority at the Busan High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness last November 2011. It is a truism to say that there can be no sustainable development without peace, and Ireland has more authority than many to engage meaningfully in support for conflict resolution initiatives, having itself had to grapple with the complexities and the oscillations of our own peace process. While each conflict situation needs to be approached on its own terms, there are valuable insights, lessons and skills around peace-building to be derived from our own pathway to relative peace on this island, and to be shared with others living amidst conflict. The Columban Fathers are particularly sensitive to this unmet need, in view of our presence in two conflict zones right now – Philippines (Mindanao) and Pakistan. Yet inclusion of a conflict

resolution strand in Irish Aid's country programmes is more the exception than the rule (Liberia and Timor Leste being the exceptions). There is clearly scope for much greater and more systematic mainstreaming of conflict resolution theory and practice throughout the Irish Aid programme, which would further enhance its quality and distinctiveness, even though the outcomes may not always be tangible, and may indeed appear to be backwards on occasion (as we know only too well from our own peace process over the past 20 years or so).

3.2. While we recognize the benefits conferred by a focus on results-based management, the new White Paper needs to caution against unrealistic expectations that tangible and verifiable results are to be expected within a short period of a few years. This caution is particularly necessary in situations where our work on the ground is concerned with behavioural and attitudinal change (for example, child protection in situations where domestic violence is rampant, or around the social inclusion of persons with disabilities), in education (where combating educational disadvantage is a long-term process), and where deprived communities are up against powerful and entrenched oligarchies (for example in Negros, Philippines where we work to prevent human trafficking). In these kinds of situations, a longer time scale is needed for the impact to become discernible, and the criteria need to be sufficiently broad to reflect both economic and social benefits of what is after all a 'public good'.

3.3 **Advocacy Training** is not only important but very necessary so that people know their rights and in the process are equipped to confront and address corruption. Any effective aid programme has to find local culturally appropriate ways to communicate the important human values which underline our commitment to human rights.

4. Ways of Working.

4.1. As the passing of time takes its inevitable toll on the numbers of Irish-born missionaries active and working in the field, we feel it is vital for the Irish Government to declare its commitment in the forthcoming White Paper to maintaining its co-funding to the development work of the Missionary Congregations and Societies. This is necessary and desirable for the following reasons:

a) Maintaining a partnership (through Mísean Cara) with local missionary organisations will provide Irish Aid and Mísean Cara with a unique network of valuable direct entry points into disadvantaged urban and rural communities, which may otherwise be at risk of neglect, and where the needs are often most pronounced;

b) Processes of planned succession and hand-over to local personnel and institutions are in danger of being jeopardised if the perception in the field were to grow that Irish funding was linked to the presence there of Irish personnel; reputational damage to Ireland's credibility would then result.

c) The missionary links continue to constitute a modest but important element of the Civil Society strand of Irish Aid's funding, which itself complements (rather

than duplicates) the official level channels for aid disbursement; this broad aid architecture has stood the test of time and merits continuation. After all, the validity and effectiveness of the work itself is what really counts, rather than the nationality of the intermediaries on the ground.

d) Ireland is enriched with an abundance of skills in food production, processing, marketing and exporting. Therefore in responding to agriculture, rural development and food security issues the Irish Government should be able to provide skill transfers to help medium to long term economic development in rural communities in the developing world. Irish Aid could perhaps facilitate such skill transfers.

e) Invest more in volunteers or Irish graduates in the field rather than supporting large salaries of UN personnel and have stricter monitoring of money for projects especially for large amounts given to governments. It would be desirable to give increased support to development interventions on the ground rather than large government projects.

Other Comments

- I know that we are in a time of recession but I cannot emphasise enough the importance of not reducing further the amount given in aid each year by the Irish Government.
- It is vitally important that Irish Aid continues to recognise the importance of improving development education among Irish people. Missionaries can play a key role here and are doing so.
- There is a great need for policy coherence for development to ensure that 'developed countries' policies on trade, climate change and security do not undermine development.
- Having been involved in the campaign calling for the cancellation of Third World Debt for many years and in association with the Debt and Development Coalition Ireland, (DDCI). I strongly urge the Irish government, through Irish Aid, to support action against unjust and illegitimate debts. Ireland's position should be outlined in an updated government policy on international debt and Ireland should also be a strong advocate for international tax justice. The DDCI campaign on Global Tax Justice should be fully supported.
- We strongly believe that the Government should fulfil its promise to reach the 0.7% of GDI for ODA by 2015.

Conclusion

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to be consulted in reviewing the White Paper. The monies that you have given to us as a Missionary Society over the years are very much appreciated. They have provided added value to the donations given to the Columbians by very generous donors and benefactors over the years. All these sources of funding and especially funding from Irish Aid have enabled Columbians in Chile, Pakistan, Peru and the Philippines to commit to basic education and primary health care including HIV/Aids, as well as income generation, rural and urban development, the environment and human rights. We

have been priveleged as a Missionary Society, over the years, to work in partnership with Irish Aid and the poor in the countries where we minister. As well as the above mentioned countries supported by Irish Aid, we also work with the poor of Fiji and Burma. We look forward to working in close collaboration with Irish Aid into the future and to continue the pioneering work initiated and undertaken by our fellow missionaries over many years.

***On behalf of the Columban Fathers
Pat Raleigh ssc
Liaison Officer and Vice Director
19th April, 2012***