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## 1. Introduction

Concern welcomes the review of the White Paper on Irish Aid, the public consultation process and in particular the consultations which have taken place across its programme countries. Since the launch of the White Paper in 2006, the world has changed immeasurably. It is important that those changes inform our aid programme into the future so that it can continue to respond as effectively as possible to the needs of the very poorest of our world.

It is equally important that the values and principles which underpin that programme are clearly articulated. Ireland is facing enormous change and challenge and the call for values-based policies is greater than ever. Our aid programme reflects a commitment to solidarity, equality, social justice, human rights and overarching adherence to international justice. It seeks to operate on the principles of partnership, public ownership and transparency, effectiveness and quality assurance, coherence and long-term sustainability. It is known for its poverty focus, its untied aid, a clear focus on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), support of civil society and its effectiveness and impact.

As Ireland continues the task of rebuilding the economy and restoring our international reputation, we must protect and promote these values, principles and attributes. Ireland's aid programme reflects the best of what we are as a country. It builds on the commitment of Irish men and women over many years and shows how a small country can play a big role on the world stage - in good times and in bad.

Concern believes that Irish Aid should use this review as an opportunity to articulate firstly the values which underpin our aid programme, secondly the principles which will be adhered to, and thirdly the core strengths and areas of competitive advantage which will shape its future direction. The consultation paper proposes a set of key issues and Concern has suggestions to make in relation to each.

Concern also endorses the Dóchas submission to this consultation and the points therein.

## **2. Progress Made: Has the Government been successful in implementing the commitments contained in the White Paper on Irish Aid?**

The consultation paper details progress against each of the commitments made in the White Paper. It shows that much has been achieved across a wide range of areas.

In the area of hunger most notably, the Government has carved out a clear and distinctive role internationally, showing strong leadership and using that leadership to encourage wider commitment to the fight against hunger. In the area of nutrition, Ireland has played a very distinct role leveraging its reputation, working to build global consensus through the 'Scaling Up Nutrition' movement.

Irish Aid's focus on maximising the effectiveness and impact of its aid has also been an area of priority and progress since the White Paper was launched. The emphases on mutual accountability and 'managing for results' is as welcome as its commitment to support for civil society both in Ireland and at programme country level. That support has been translated into practical action in respect of countries where the space for civil society is being constrained by restrictive laws and regulations.

What has overshadowed this progress however has been the cumulative cut to the ODA budget since 2006. The total reduction of 30% has taken its toll on a range of White Paper commitments, on the work of NGOs and others whose budgets have been cut, and most importantly on those with whom we work across the developing world.

The severity of the initial cuts in particular showed the vulnerability of the aid programme to domestic pressure. Perhaps more revealing looking back over the full period is the dissonance between the commitment Ireland has shown to international development over many years, the values and principles which underpin the Government's programme, and the erosion of the overall budget.

As part of the White Paper review, Irish Aid should examine that dissonance and propose how it will work with others in the short, medium and longer term to increase public and political support for Irish aid, on the basis of a greater understanding of its quality and impact.

The economic context will continue to be challenging in the years ahead, making this task all the more important, and the need for new and creative approaches all the more necessary. Efforts to restore our international reputation, our upcoming EU Presidency, and the budding debate about the post-2015 development framework each provide important opportunities to stimulate debate and strengthen national and international support for Ireland's aid programme broadly and the government's commitment to achievement of the MDGs and the 0.7% target by 2015 more specifically.

### **3. 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 priorities?**

Irish Aid has a clear focus on working with the poorest people in the poorest parts of the world. Looking to the future, we see considerable risk that the lives and livelihoods of those same people will become even more vulnerable than they are today.

Climate change is leading to more frequent and severe disasters. Population growth, spikes in food prices, the global financial and economic crisis and increasing urbanization are all increasing vulnerability and need. Levels of need are rising, in some instances outstripping the capacity and availability of resources to meet those needs, while levels of inequality at national levels are also on the increase. Conflict, with associated security concerns, often coincides with a reduced humanitarian space and the capacity of aid organisations to reach the poorest people in many parts of the world. At the same time, the space for civil society in many more countries is becoming increasingly restricted.

The impacts of these trends on extremely poor people are likely to include a significant increase and deepening of food insecurity; worsening water stress; reduced capacity, availability and access to basic healthcare and education services; and an increase in social tensions leading to violence and abuse. More severe, intense and frequent extreme weather events will see patterns of behaviour and livelihoods change. Inequalities within societies, most notably gender inequality, will only serve to exacerbate these problems leaving the marginalised the least able to meet their basic needs, protect themselves from human rights abuses and to lead a dignified life.

Against that backdrop, it is vital that Ireland remains committed to working with the poorest people in the poorest parts of the world and that it invests in those areas in which it has a track record, core competence and competitive advantage.

The 'EU Code of Conduct on Complementarity and Division of Labour' has already seen changes to Ireland's focus in some programme countries. While the intention of those decisions is to maximise the effectiveness of EU aid more broadly, Irish Aid should communicate such changes pro-actively while using its influence to ensure all such decisions are made on the basis of the needs of the partner country, in accordance with EU legal obligations, commitments to 'democratic ownership' and in a spirit of partnership and respect.

The proposed 'key issues' set out in the consultation paper make sense given Ireland's past record and the challenges which lie ahead. The following section makes proposals in relation to each 'key issue', while equally important is the influence Ireland can and should bring to bear on other donors, most especially EU member states, to ensure the collective commitment of the donor community to each area in each country is adequate and appropriate, effective and impactful.

## 4. How should the Government respond to key issues:

### 4.1 Hunger

Ireland is now recognised internationally as a leader in the fight against hunger. This recognition is the result of a clear and deliberate focus – from the establishment of the Hunger Taskforce to the steps since taken on foot of its recommendations. Concern urges Irish Aid to:

- **Build on Ireland’s international reputation** in the area of hunger by putting it at the heart of Ireland’s aid programme, based on the overarching principle of the right to food, and highlighting the multi-dimensional nature of the problem and the need to respond in a multi-dimensional way.
- **Continue its leadership in the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN)** process and ensure clearer integration of the three pillars of the Hunger Taskforce Report - particularly agriculture and nutrition – at programming and policy levels.
- Support the trialling and development of **models for acute and chronic malnutrition reduction**, bringing effective interventions to scale and increasing understanding and examples of nutrition sensitive approaches.
- Give greater attention to **effective post-emergency rehabilitation** to ensure that local agriculture resilience and local initiatives are strengthened.
- Take a lead role in promoting the effective implementation of the recently agreed **Voluntary Guidelines on the Tenure of Land and on the Natural Resources** and thereafter support the **“responsible agriculture investment”** process which will be overseen by the Committee on World Food Security (CFS).
- Outline in detail the breakdown of the **government’s investment in hunger, its proximity to the 20% target**, and attain and maintain that level on a sustained basis into the future.

## 4.2 Fragility

Building on Ireland's existing commitment to working in fragile states and addressing situations of fragility effectively, the outcome of the White Paper review should:

- **Confirm that humanitarian principles underpin Irish policy and practice at home and abroad and enshrine the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid in a humanitarian policy.**
- **Call on all EU member states to take similar action, and advance proposals for regular monitoring and reporting of adherence to the European Consensus.**
- **Actively advocate for the protection of the humanitarian budget under ECHO and ensure that ECHO does not become instrumentalised** in any way under the comprehensive approach to crisis management being developed by the European External Action Service (EEAS). Separation between ECHO and EEAS is essential to preserve the mandate, principles and practice of EU humanitarian assistance.
- Recognise the importance of Disaster Risk Reduction as an effective and necessary investment and **commit to promoting and influencing the wider international community to support DRR.**
- Take a **pro-active leadership role at EU and UN levels** in advocating for prevention and proposing early international response to slow onset disasters including famines.
- Recognise the need for a **diversity of professional humanitarian actors in humanitarian responses** and **promote adherence to MCDA and Oslo Guidelines** in the event of the deployment of military forces.

### 4.3 Climate Change

The accelerating pace of climate change, combined with population and income growth, threatens global food security by the day. Projections by Easterling and Aggarwal estimate that the numbers of people at risk of hunger because of climate change are 10 – 20% greater than they would otherwise be<sup>1</sup>. Given the disproportionate impact climate change has on the poorest and most vulnerable, and the sustained commitment Ireland has shown to the fight against hunger, Concern urges the Irish Government to:

- Continue to **focus on climate change adaptation** which requires an acceleration of sustainable development which is 'climate smart', taking into account future unpredictability and actively seeking to reduce risks.
- Prioritise **community-resilient sustainable agriculture**, recognising the impact of climate change on agriculture, but also the role that agriculture needs to play in helping mitigate climate change.
- **Invest in women marginal farmers** who are affected disproportionately as a result of climate change and who could play a significant role in initiating and promoting sustainable practices.
- **Commit to Greenhouse Gas emission reductions in Ireland** and support stronger emission reductions within the EU, recognising the implications of current low levels of ambition for vulnerable people in developing countries.
- Ensure appropriate and adequate funding of responses to the effects of climate change, which are **additional to current ODA commitments**.

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<sup>1</sup> Climate Change and Hunger, Responding to the Challenge; WFP 2009.



## 4.4 Basic Needs

Ireland's commitment to meeting basic needs dates back to a missionary tradition which even today is remembered and recognised the world over. The government's aid programme has maintained a strong commitment to social sectors, recognising that investment in human capital is the first step on any path to development. As the debate about the development framework 'post-2015' begins, it is essential that the White Paper review recommits Ireland to addressing basic needs through its own programmes, its support of NGOs and other development actors, and through political dialogue with partner and donor governments.

Recognising that **education** provides a long-term mechanism to lift the poorest people out of poverty, and supports the success of interventions in other sectors, especially improved health, livelihoods and gender equality, the White Paper review should:

- **Prioritise improved quality** of education in primary schools, most especially initiatives to improve learning outcomes in basic literacy, numeracy and life skills.
- **Focus on equity and gender parity** in education, including initiatives that address and respond to school-related gender based violence.
- Target access to quality education for **children in fragile states and education in emergency settings**, focusing on the most vulnerable girls and boys.

In terms of Ireland's investment in **health**, Concern urges Irish Aid to:

- **Invest in maternal and child health**, particularly in the area of health system strengthening. In the poorest and most vulnerable countries, these are still the leading causes of morbidity and mortality.
- Confirm Ireland's priority in relation to improving **water, sanitation and hygiene** - key issues required to meet basic needs and instrumental in addressing mortality and morbidity, particularly in children – necessary as part of an integrated approach and links with nutrition and hunger.
- Recognize **the strong link between nutrition and health** programmes and **move away from funding vertical nutrition programmes**.

In relation to **HIV and AIDS**, Ireland should continue to provide strong leadership at international level by:

- **completing and publishing its HIV Policy and Strategy** in consultation with country partners and civil society following the publication of its reviewed White Paper.
- **maintaining the commitment to spend €100million/year** on HIV and AIDS and other communicable diseases, with 20% of it allocated to children.
- Promoting the **Human Rights of People Living with and Affected by HIV and AIDS** through support and implementation of the GIPA Principles (Greater involvement of people living with or affected by HIV and AIDS).
- **Demonstrating and supporting mutual accountability** towards the Irish public, those living with and affected by HIV and AIDS, and its Irish Aid partners for all commitments made in the reviewed White Paper in relation to HIV and AIDS.

#### 4.5 Governance and Human Rights

The economic crisis has intensified debate about the efficacy of aid in countries with weak governance and highlighted the need to articulate more clearly, consistently and publicly Irish Aid's efforts to strengthen governance structures including measures taken to support citizens' ability to participate in their political, social and economic development. Going forward, it should:

- Report annually on the benchmarks set down to monitor implementation of the "Building Good Governance through Development Cooperation - Policy Orientations for Irish Aid".
- Communicate more consistently the extent to which good governance is prioritised as a cross-cutting issue across Irish Aid's programme, and the extent to which the lessons and experiences of research and best practice are reflected in its governance work.
- Build on Ireland's commitment to the Aid Effectiveness agenda and work with partner country governments, at EU and OECD levels in ensuring the outcomes of Busan are translated into meaningful positive change at country level.
- Name the human rights principles which will inform Irish Aid's work and set out the mechanisms for integrating these rights into the planning, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of aid programmes and into other areas of Government policy impacting on development.

## 4.6 Gender

Understanding that the burden of poverty rests disproportionately on women and girls, the White Paper review should commit to strengthening – at political, policy and programme level - its **focus on gender** through:

- The **development of a strategic vision for girls and women** which articulates how this priority is embedded across all levels and which includes accountability mechanisms for the implementation of Irish Aid's Gender Equality Policy.
- **Clear, consistent and transparent focus in all Irish Aid funded work** on the needs of women and girls and the means by which those needs will be met.
- **Gender analysis in Irish Aid** reporting and inclusion of comprehensive and disaggregated data in the annual Gender Monitoring Report.
- **Full implementation of the National Action Plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325**
- Political dialogue with country programmes, using its influence to call for support of and adherence to gender-related international commitments.

## 4.7 Private Sector

The private sector offers significant potential for addressing extreme poverty through backward and forward linkages and integrating the extreme poor into sustainable markets. To assist such an approach requires:

- **Support for programmes which address the capacity of the private sector** – in some countries there are major gaps in terms of available skills for business development. This can be addressed through better technical and vocational education and training, provision of support to business development services.
- **Use of a 'markets approach'** in creating or supporting sustainable livelihoods, linking small scale producers to the market, through the Value Chain Approach (VCA), ensuring access to finance, processing facilities and market opportunities.
- **Support of high quality market analysis** to understand where market opportunities exist that can work for the poor – be it as producers, workers, or consumers, ensuring this analysis is made public to enable the design of interventions based on reliable market information.
- **Support for the development of physical Infrastructure** to allow access to the markets (roads, telecommunications).

## 5. Given the limited resources and the need to focus these, which issues should the government prioritise in its future aid programming?

Concern believes that the priorities set by the government should be anchored by a commitment to the fight against hunger in development, emergency & transition contexts. This commitment should be reflected at all levels, from programme priorities to delivery on the commitment to spend 20% on hunger, from collaboration with civil society partners to leveraging Ireland's reputation to increase international commitment and delivery in the fight against hunger. Ireland's aid programming going forward should also reflect a balanced approach towards on the one hand working in partnership with governments to support systems' strengthening and capacity building, and on the other providing appropriate and adequate support to communities in order that they are empowered and strengthened as agents of change in their own development.

## **6. Ways of Working: How can the government further strengthen its ways of working in delivering an effective aid programme, with a view to delivering real results in poverty reduction?**

In order to strengthen its ways of working in support of a more effective and impactful aid programme, Concern calls on Irish Aid to:

- Reconfirm Ireland's focus on the poorest countries and on the poorest, most marginalised areas and communities within countries, and put in place transparent systems for monitoring this prioritisation and the impact of the resultant policies.
- Establish a multi-year framework for ODA and outline the annual targets for ODA that would enable Ireland to reach the 0.7% target by 2015. A commitment should also be given to move towards obligatory reporting on the payment schedules of Ireland's multi-year ODA commitments and Ireland's performance in meeting its commitment to spend up to 20% of the total ODA allocation on hunger, and at least €100 million of ODA each year on HIV and AIDS and other communicable diseases.
- Institute a report every two years on policies across government, in line with EC reporting, to identify examples of any policies which undermine the government's development goals so that such policies can be amended to avoid or reduce negative effects on the poor and look for synergies and value-added between different policies. The report should set measurable targets and indicators, and identify explicit strategies to address areas of incoherence.
- Outline how Ireland will, at programme country, European and international levels, build on its commitment to each element of the Aid Effectiveness agenda, in particular its actions to ensure an enabling environment for civil society and adherence to the principle of 'democratic ownership'.
- State that as a matter of standard practice, Irish Aid will involve civil society organisations, in Ireland and internationally, including women's organisations, in the preparation, design, delivery and monitoring of policies and programmes as well as in the overall impact analysis of Ireland's relations with programme countries.
- Build on Irish Aid's long-standing support for Development Education initiatives in Ireland, which play a fundamental role in building commitment by empowering people to become active citizens with the skills, knowledge and behaviour to seek equity in global relations and support for international development efforts.
- Evaluate Ireland's contribution to the EU and to multilateral fora where common EU positions are applied, and consider how greater transparency and public ownership of inputs to these fora can be achieved. Recommit Ireland to continuing to be an active pro-development voice at EU level on any issues that impact on developing countries.
- Work with other parts of the government to ensure our aid programme is recognised as a foundation stone in rebuilding our international reputation and work with NGOs and other constituencies in Ireland to communicate more consistently and coherently the impact of Irish aid across the globe.

**7. Other comments: if the respondent seeks to address other issues – of direct relevance to the White Paper on Irish Aid – they should do so in this section**

Ireland's aid programme is clearly anchored in a commitment to achievement of the MDGs by 2015. The White Paper should articulate Irish Aid's orientation on the post-2015 framework, the means by which it should be agreed upon, and the need to ensure transparency, accountability, and ownership of the process and outcome which will shape the future consensus on the international fight against poverty.

- Institute a report every two years on progress against government, in line with EC reporting, to identify examples of any policies which undermine the government's development goals so that such policies can be amended to avoid or reduce negative effects on the poor and look for synergies and value added between different policies. The report should set measurable targets and indicators, and identify explicit strategies to address areas of incoherence.
- Outline how Ireland will, as programme country, European and international level, build on its commitment to each element of the Aid Effectiveness agenda, in particular its actions to ensure an enabling environment for civil society and adherence to the principle of 'democratic ownership'.
- State that as a matter of standard practice, Irish Aid will involve civil society organisations, in Ireland and internationally, including women's organisations, in the preparation, design, delivery and monitoring of policies and programmes as well as in the overall impact analysis of Ireland's relations with programme countries.
- Build on Irish Aid's long-standing support for Development Education Initiatives in Ireland, which play a fundamental role in building commitment, empowering people to become active citizens with the skills, knowledge and behaviour to seek equity in global relations and support for international development efforts.
- Evaluate Ireland's contribution to the EU and to multilateral fora where common EU positions are applied, and consider how greater transparency and public ownership of inputs to these fora can be achieved. Re-commit Ireland to continuing to be an active pro-development voice at EU level on any issues that impact on developing countries.
- Work with other parts of the government to ensure our aid programme is recognised as a foundation stone in rebuilding our international reputation and work with NGOs and other counterparts in Ireland to communicate more consistently and coherently the impact of Irish aid across the globe.