

Submission on Review of White Paper on Overseas Aid

Organisation: Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul

Introduction

The Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul are an international congregation founded by Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac in Paris, France in 1633. The charism of the Daughters of Charity is to serve people who are vulnerable and economically poor. Since its inception the congregation has been missionary in nature. Currently there are 19,000 sisters working in 91 countries throughout the 5 continents. The first sisters came to Ireland in 1855 and the first Irish sisters went on mission to Nigeria in 1933. To Sierra Leone in 1989 and to Kenya in 2002. Currently the Irish province supports the work of the sisters in Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana and Burkina Faso. We also respond to disasters such as famine and earthquakes in other countries where the Daughters of Charity live and work.

The Congregation has been actively involved with Irish Aid for many many years, initially through APSO and also direct support from Irish Aid through the Missionary Development Fund and in latter years through the IMRS which is now Mísean Cara.

Progress Made

The 2006 White Paper as acknowledged in the Consultative Paper “was developed at a time of rising levels of economic growth”. Despite the downturn in the Irish economy in recent years, it is commendable that Ireland has been able to continue its contribution to the fight against global poverty with an allocated budget of €639 million for overseas aid in 2012. While we agree with the Independent Reviews and Evaluations as outlined in the Consultation Paper that “Irish Aid is a development programme of quality, which is well-focused on the world’s poorest people” we have to also acknowledge that while much has been achieved there is still much to be done.

Through the support received from the Irish Government through Irish Aid, Mísean Cara and our own other partners, it has been made possible for our Congregation to further develop its work with the marginalized and most vulnerable in many sector areas such as: The DREAM (Drug Resource Enhancement Against Aids and Malnutrition) programme. The main aim of this programme is to prevent mother to child transmission of the HIV virus. Other projects that have a strong community development focus include; primary health care; women empowerment; income generating; basic education; education and advocacy programmes for children and adults with disabilities. We believe in working in partnership with the local communities and empowerment programmes form an essential part of all our projects

Capacity building and skills training both within the Congregation, with our project personnel and with the local communities has been an essential part of our partnership with Mísean Cara. As missionaries, our main focus is on the holistic development of the whole person/community, not just concentrating on meeting their material or economic needs. However, the importance of needs assessments, clearly defined activities, outputs, outcomes

and long term impact plus the need for rigorous and transparent accounting has also helped to build capacity.

In Kenya and Nigeria we have held many training workshops (funded by Misesan Cara) on management issues; human trafficking; project cycle management. In 2010 the Daughters of Charity hosted a intercongregational training of trainers workshop on the development of principles and policies for the safe guarding children and vulnerable adults. In Kenya in 2011 an evaluation of all Misesan Cara supported projects was carried out by an external consultant.

To date we have had no problem with succession planning. When the Daughters of Charity open a new mission they immerse themselves into the lives of the people and this results in many young indigenous women joining the congregation. In Nigeria the projects are totally managed by indigenous sisters with capacity building training and some financial support from Ireland. The Nigerian sisters are now training young sisters from Ghana. In Kenya the young indigenous sisters are working alongside the expatriate sisters with a view to eventually managing the projects.

Changing Context

We were very happy to read in the New Africa Strategy released by the Department of Foreign Affairs in September 2011 that “Ireland will continue to use its position within the EU to support a focus on the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable, especially in sub-Saharan Africa”.

Regardless of the dwindling number of Irish or European Sisters, we are confident that our work can continue through our indigenous Sisters. They will need to be supported from Ireland both financially and through continuing capacity building training.

Value for Money

The Daughters of Charity have high standards of accountability and transparency in all their projects. By supporting the work of the missionaries the Irish Government can be assured of value for money.

Priorities

The Daughters of Charity are involved in the following projects and these must continue to be supported by Irish Aid into the future:

Nutrition and food security programmes

Basic Health Care

Basic Education – especially for the girl child and those with disabilities

Human Trafficking – We are addressing this problem through education programmes in collaboration with national and local government agencies

HIV/AIDS Awareness and Prevention – Through the DREAM programmes

Care of the Environment – The Congregation considers the environment as a priority.

Changes in the environment due to climate change also impacts on developing countries. This is taken into account in all our projects.

Ways of Working

Continue to support the work of missionaries who are working at grassroots level with the local communities. Continue to have regular ongoing dialogue with all the stakeholders involved. Perhaps reconsider support from Government to Government if the political system in a given country is not accountable or transparent.

Other Comments

As missionaries are there for the long haul, if possible, we would like to see the introduction of multi-annual funding, this would be of enormous benefit with planning of development interventions.

Ireland can be very proud of its record in its overseas aid development programme. We would urge the Government that despite the difficult economic situation in Ireland, to resist the pressure from many sources to have further cuts in the overseas aid budget. We appreciate that many families are enduring great hardship in Ireland at the present time but it will be the marginalized and most vulnerable people in the world, who are not responsible for the current economic crisis, who will suffer if there are further reductions in the aid budget.

Thank you for the comprehensive opportunities you provided to participate in this Review of the White Paper on Overseas Aid.

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