



Submission to Review of the White Paper on Irish Aid

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Introduction

Development Perspectives (DP) welcomes this opportunity to contribute to the review of the White Paper on Irish Aid. We want to congratulate Irish Aid on the results of the independent reviews and evaluations presented in the consultation paper. They clearly illustrate the fact that Ireland's aid programme is high quality.

Founded in 2006, DP is an independent Development NGO working mainly in Ireland but also with partners in Tanzania, Uganda, Liberia and from 2012, Zambia. The majority of our work involves an emphasis on Development Education. DP has a very active network of Development Education practitioners at home and abroad. We have 2,200 people following us on Face book and are very active within the Irish (National Council members of IDEA) and the European Development Education Sector. This submission has been written based on a consultation process within DP and is, therefore, reflective of views and opinions of Development Practitioners across a broad spectrum of Irish Society.

In this submission, DP is calling for

1. Delivery on the .7% of GNP UN target for ODA.
2. Inculcation of a rights based approach to Development – Reframing Aid as Development.
3. Deeper and broader Integration of Development Education into the fabric of Irish Development Policy.
4. Policy Coherence for Development.
5. More Democratic and representative governance of Institutions.

Changing Contexts

DP understands the changing context people, families and countries are contending with. We also realise the changed landscape in terms of challenges facing us such as the financial crisis. However we also view this time as one of opportunity to confront some of the root causes of Poverty, Inequality, Hunger and Conflict.

The population of the planet is growing, technology is improving rapidly and modern communication tools have revolutionised the way in which humans interact. This ever changing and evolving context needs to pay heed to emerging Development Challenges. Leading Edge 2020 (Trocaire) outlines the Development challenges we need to be more cognisant of. Amongst them are

Climate Justice

“Climate change is no longer a development issue – it is now a key context which will increasingly shape, if not determine, what can be achieved in terms of development.” (Trócaire, 2010, pg 12)

Irish Aid is to be congratulated for making climate change one of the key issues of their programme. It is without doubt one of the biggest challenges facing the planet. It must be noted however that Ireland is one of the worst climate polluting countries in the world.

Climate Change Legislation in Ireland is necessary for there not be incongruence between what we do and what we talk about in terms of Development Policy.

Widening Inequality

In terms of Inequality, Ireland is one of the more unequal countries in Europe and given the importance of tackling inequality in Development discourse, it's important we move beyond understanding to action at home and abroad.

"In 1990 most of the world's poor people (93 per cent) lived in poor countries – meaning low-income countries (LICs). Two decades on, the world's poor – 72 per cent, or almost one billion poor people – now live in middle-income countries (MIC) and 61 per cent of the world's poor live in stable MICs. LICs account for just 28 per cent of the world's poor, and fragile LICs account for just 12 per cent. This is a startling change over two decades. Contrary to earlier estimates that a third of the poor live in fragile and conflict-affected states, our estimate is about 23–26 per cent if one takes the broadest definition. The picture is fairly similar taking education, nutrition and the new UNDP multidimensional poverty index". (Sumner 2010:22)

DP agrees with the IDEA submission to this review when it states "Most research into the changing landscape of international development cooperation and aid point to the fact that development without a clear focus on equality, inclusion and rights will not deliver results in relation to poverty reduction globally" (IDEA, 2012).

1. Delivery on the .7%

DP is calling for the White paper to deliver on commitments in this regard. We are disappointed with the track record of the Irish state in relation to the .7% and are calling for definitive action. We want delivery on the .7% commitment to International Development.

2. Rights Based approach to Development – Re Framing Aid as Development

The current White paper highlights underpinning values through its language. It talks about Needs rather than Rights. DP is calling for the White paper to shift towards a Human Rights based approach to Development. This would mean a change in the tone and type of language used in the White paper. By playing its part in Global Development, Ireland is rightly upholding part of its well publicised International obligations and is not being "generous". The Dochas, IDEA and Trocaire White paper submissions also illustrate this point.

Language is important in this regard as Martin Kirk points out in his research of 2010 and 2011 (Finding Frames, Oxfam). We need to talk about Development Effectiveness rather than Aid Effectiveness and include people in Ireland as actors within Development rather than funders of Aid, which is a charity model of Development. Development Education can play a part in eliminating the language of "Us" and "Them" by creating a landscape in which we all play a part. This moves towards encouraging active citizenship places the responsibility and challenges of Development on all our shoulders.

3. Deeper and broader Integration of Development Education into the fabric of Irish Development Policy

Ireland is seen in Europe to be one of the leading nations in relation to its Development Education practice. DP has played a part in this success story. Last year, DP led the DEEEP Development Education Summer School in Finland, which focused on Quality and Impact. As a result of our growing reputation, we were invited to design a training course for Development Education practitioners in Luxembourg to support the creation of Quality criteria for their work. 2012 will see DP contribute again to the forthcoming DEEEP Summer School where we will be facilitating one of the working groups.

The Development Education sector doesn't get much coverage in the consultation paper, which is disappointing for a number of reasons.

Development Education can help increase the level of public ownership of the Irish Aid programme as well as deepen public engagement. The White paper recognises the importance of both of these issues. However, there seems to be a blind spot in Irish Aid in relation to the potential of Development Education to deliver results as change makers at home and abroad. The "Story so far – An Impact Enquiry" (DP, 2012) illustrates the impact of one Development Education programme. By changing the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviour of people, structural causes of poverty, hunger and inequality can be addressed. Development Education should not be seen only as an information tool. The investment in this sector is low and should be increased to reflect the possibility and potential for change it can call upon.

4. Policy Coherence for Development (PCD)

DP believes that Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) is an important part of any successful Development recipe and is urging greater effort in this regard.

DP supports the Dóchas proposal to institute a bi-annual report on progress in this area. In line with EC reporting this report should highlight successes towards PCD as well as identify any government policies that undermine the ambitious goals set by the White paper. It's crucially important that in terms of taxation, trade, agriculture, energy and climate justice that Government departments are singing from the same hymn sheet or at least not moving in opposite directions. A systems view perspective on Development would be welcome and opportune.

5. More Democratic and representative governance of Institutions.

To achieve a fairer, more equitable and just world, current Global Power imbalances need to be addressed. DP is calling for the Irish state to use its influence during the forthcoming EU Presidency and in the White paper to confront the unfair and unhealthy governance of the UN, EU, WTO, IMG and WB. A cursory glance of the UN Security Council sees no African or South American representation. From a Democratic point of view, current governance processes are deeply flawed and need to be remedied. Ireland can and should play a role in this arena given its positive international image in terms of Development practice.

Ways of Working

DP is calling for Irish Aid to continue to work in partnership in its Development endeavours. This approach needs to be continued and built upon through the embracing of a Rights Based Approach to Development. Our collective commitment to Development should be for all seasons in all conditions. Furthermore, our practice needs to reflect our policies. Ireland needs to take seriously its record in terms of Equality and Climate Justice at home in order for us to be living examples of what can be done abroad. Our record in light of the Good Friday agreement brought much positive media coverage of our expertise in dealing with conflict. Why not lead the field internationally in terms of investment in Development Education, Climate Change Legislation and equality outcomes.

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