2. Response:

Introduction:

The Development Studies Association, Ireland (DSAI) brings together the DSA members on the island of Ireland and seeks to provide a central point for academics and practitioners to network and actively promote research for development in Ireland. The DSAI provides the space where the particularly Irish perspectives afforded by our unique history and our relatively recent experience of managing successful development assistance programmes can be analysed, critiqued and learning disseminated.

The Development Studies Association of the UK & Ireland, of which DSAI is a part, has the following three main objectives:
1. Promote the advancement of knowledge on international development.
2. Disseminate information on development research and training
3. Encourage interdisciplinary exchange and co-operation

DSAI also aims to:
- Provide a central point to promote research for development in Ireland.
- Provide the space where unique Irish perspectives can be analysed, critiqued and learnt from.

The DSAI is fully committed to the values and principles set out by Irish Aid in the White Paper and in particular to the value of collaboration for greater development effectiveness. The DSAI itself believes in the value of networking where the results that emerge are greater than the sum of the parts. DSAI members would like to communicate their commitment to contribute to a comprehensive effort to ensure that Ireland's efforts in favour of the poorest in the world bring them maximum benefit. The following response is made in line with the aforementioned aspects of the DSAI's mandate.

The process of coordinating a joint submission from our membership is a good example of the activity and value of a network such as DSAI. This was our first attempt to coordinate such a process. Two members of the DSAI Steering Committee were co-opted to draft a short submission. This was reviewed and approved by the committee, then circulated to the wider network of approximately 160 members for comment and feedback. The draft was circulated both by email and posted on our website DSAI net's online forum (www.dsaireland.org/dsai_net/group/white-paper-review) for discussion and comment. There was much discussion and feedback over our approach to the submission as well as the content of the submission. This meant that we were not able to spend as long as we would have wished to discuss specific issues in greater depth as part of the process. This was a valuable learning experience for DSAI and helped strengthen one of our functions as a network containing diverse types of organisations and multiple views.

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Progress Made:

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

- It is obvious that Irish Aid has made significant progress on many of its commitments and strategies as outlined in the White Paper, even if the information or evidence to make this judgement is not always easily found.
- Development partnerships between researchers and practitioners have improved in recent years with forums such as the Irish Forum for Global Health and the Development Studies Association of Ireland. Support from Irish Aid (for example through the PSC and other programmes) has helped to create an enabling environment for interdisciplinary and inter-institutional interaction between researchers and has also prompted practitioners to utilize research more effectively.
- One of the weaknesses of Irish Aid has been in the implementation of some of the principles enunciated in the 2006 White Paper. This is particularly so in the collection and analysis on data on the activities supported by Irish Aid and in ensuring policy coherence for development. DSAI members have abilities that would enable them to make major contributions to improving the impact of Ireland's efforts in both these spheres.
- There was a view of the need for balance between support to government poverty reduction strategies and more honed civil society, community development and ethnic minority targeted strategies.
- There was also a view that the term 'aid' continues to be problematic and can undermine the development discourse.

Changing context:

i. 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?

Since the White Paper was initiated, there has been considerable progress and consolidation of a community of practice around development policy and research. To promote the advancement of knowledge on international development and retain the long term support of the Irish people for a development agenda in times of contraction as well as growth, there is a need to provide a consistent justification for development efforts including clear communication of development activities and results achieved.

The accountability of Irish Aid is more pressing in the new global context. We suggest two ways in which this can be addressed:

  (i) Further developing the capacity to monitor and evaluate the impact and outcome of development interventions of key institutions and stakeholders.
  (ii) Better communication of development activities including research findings in the academic and development media, but also in the public media promoting an approach based on human rights and justice in a global economy. There may be a concurrent need to ensure that balanced and informed views are represented in these communications.

Key Issues:

ii. *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?*

The DSAI was not able to debate and discuss these specific themes although many of them were mentioned by individuals as of high importance. The general statements about the need for transparent data collection, rigorous evaluation of Irish Aid supported programmes and interventions as well as the place of research, policy debate and policy coherence for development would, however, apply to most of these issues.

The DSAI does however suggest a greater level of inter-sectoral working. Greater inter-sectorality could be in three areas:

   a. More joined up government in Ireland, making Irish policy across the Departments more coherent with our aid programme
   b. Promoting greater inter-sectorality within recipient governments – e.g. the links between Hunger, HIV, Education, Health and Agriculture, linking them through a pro-poor poverty alleviation focus.
   c. At the community level.

iii. *Given the limited resources and the need to focus these, which issues should the Government prioritise in its future aid programming?*

We believe that Irish Aid's continued support for organisations that focus on and prioritise development research and on building capacity for development research in the North and South is crucial, including both HERIS and civil society actors. This is a strategy recognised by Irish Aid and should be supported into the future.

Support for education at all levels, including higher education, should be prioritised as this underpins and benefits all sectors aiming to deal with key issues in development.

Thus DSAI proposes:

   1. *Development of research and generation of evidence*
Irish Aid should continue to support and champion the role of research in Ireland and in developing countries which focuses on development and humanitarian crises, and the generation of evidence and learning that can be applied at varying levels to tackle poverty.

Development related research conducted by institutions in Ireland and in developing countries should be focused on the research priorities of the developing country.

In addition, Irish Aid should document the benefit of supporting research for development within its overall aid programme and actively promote this approach with other donors.

   2. *Type of research*
Irish Aid should continue to support institutions, organisations and processes that 'raise the game' in the Irish development and humanitarian sectors in terms of quality of policy analysis, research and practice, the result of which would be more applied and better utilised research, more evidence-

informed decision and policy making and more evidence and learning based programmes being managed by practitioners.

Irish Aid should do more to build rigorous evidence, analysis and healthy policy debate. This can be facilitated by ensuring data collection and analysis is integrated into all its work to show which type of interventions are effective in addressing poverty and support research that contributes to the production of such evidence.

Irish Aid should prioritise and incentivise action-research, operations-research and process research which could display the unique contribution to global knowledge from Ireland, based on comparative advantage and the particular perspectives of Ireland.

3. *Development of research capacity*
Irish Aid should continue to support the capacity building of research in developing countries and their research partners and collaborators, especially supporting a free and enabling environment in which independent research can be carried out and where the results from research can be used for effective policy and practice influence. Note that this approach must be matched by donor countries to be credible. This support should be based on lessons learned from productive 'research for development' practice, including linking Northern and Southern research institutions in focused and practical ways, with the aim to increase Southern ownership of the research that is relevant to their own development processes. It should also link and support South-South research institutions and programmes.

4. *Research with a specific focus on countries in conflict and humanitarian crisis*
Irish Aid should allocate specific funding to promote the improvement of research and generation of evidence from humanitarian assistance operations in both armed conflict and natural disaster settings. Irish Aid should incentivise NGOs and other operational agencies to design, and produce stronger evidence bases regarding promotion of developmental, human rights and human security-based approaches. This base can be used to improve effectiveness, including risk reduction and prevention strategies. Support to any institutional spaces in Ireland which might promote such objectives would be also important.

In this context and not specific to research, the inter-dependence between long-term peace-building and development work should be given greater recognition by Irish Aid. Development interventions can often be set back and derailed by violence and unresolved conflict; in fragile states, for example, there is by definition little capacity to manage change and resolve conflict peacefully. It would be timely if the White Paper were to explicitly commend 'conflict sensitive development practice' as a priority concern (echoing the Busan HLF4 meeting, Nov 2011 (ref HLF4 Communique, paragraph 26).

Ways of Working:

iv. *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?*

1. Partnerships:
We believe that the best way to deliver real results in poverty reduction is to develop partnerships with key actors: governments, Civil Society Organisations including HEIs and NGOs as well as the private sector, with the focus of all partnerships on poverty reduction. The DSAI argues strongly against any kind of 'tying' of aid or direct use of aid to assist the Irish private or public sectors. Any

move in this direction on the part of the Irish Government would likely damage its credibility. The DSAI believes that were Ireland to follow the tied aid route, there would be an immediate drop in the public support for aid which has held up remarkably well during the present financial crisis.

Important aspects to developing partnerships are:

1. Institutional networks

A network of Irish higher education institutions could help to harmonise and align education policies of relevance for students from developing countries studying in Ireland and to ensure coherence in level of fees and services offered.

Irish Aid should use and build/extend their existing networks (institutional and individual) to input on the development and implementation of Irish Aid's research strategy. Existing forums which are multisectoral, interdisciplinary and include different stakeholders, such as NGOs, HEIs and policy makers should be given special attention.

2. Communication within partnerships

Direct, open communication channels should be established and/or maintained between Irish Aid and existing and newly developed/developing partners with respect to input and guidance on research on and for development. For example, the communication on initial submissions for the Round 3 call of the Programme of Strategic Cooperation between Irish Aid and Higher Education and Research Institutes damaged relationships between Irish Aid and the development research community in Ireland and their partners in developing countries.

There should be much greater clarity and transparency on process, in the case that financial commitments cannot be realized, either to higher education institutions or to Irish NGOs.

2. Knowledge Systems:

Complex problems such as ecological degradation require knowledge systems that harness both diverse empirical and experiential knowledge from citizens and the capacity for augmenting decision making system capacity by harnessing networks. Irish Aid could benefit by adopting new communication and information standards such as Open Government Data, citizen deliberations and stronger links to the research community (full details, justifications and examples provided below)

- Open Data
  Irish Aid could adopt Open Government Data standards. This would involve making programme and project data easily accessible to the public. It is also suggested that Irish Aid further support the international Open Government movement to enable recipient governments to open their data also to citizens.
- Collaboration and Deliberation with citizens and partners
  Deliberative (as opposed to participatory) processes with the Irish public and the implementation of an open discussion network on issues related to the work of Irish Aid.
- Rooted in Open Collaboration and Research
  An integrated knowledge generation and research framework is necessary. It is proposed that Irish Aid augment their internal knowledge with that generated through citizen deliberations and with the research and innovation capacity of Irish Higher Education institutions. These sources are currently under-utilised. By making core data available (Open Data) in useable formats, Irish Aid can open opportunities for research to be self-generated by the research community. This in turns leads to the emergence and identification of relevant expertise for Irish Aid's programmatic and strategic needs.

3. New knowledge use and management practices

With an increase in knowledge input, Irish Aid must establish improved knowledge management practices. The 2009 OECD-DAC Peer Review stated that: "Irish Aid recognises that a more systematic approach to learning and knowledge management is needed…Irish Aid relies on outside sources for specific analytical inputs and research relevant to its policy agenda." (p 51). In relation to knowledge management practice, DSAI believes that Irish Aid needs to address any deficits it may have before making recommendations to Southern governments/ partners.

4. Better communication of lessons and findings:

To promote the advancement of knowledge on international development and not lose the long term generosity of the Irish for development issues in this harsher economic climate, there is a need to better communicate development results achieved. The accountability of Irish Aid is more pressing in this new global context. We suggest two ways in which this can be addressed:

- Developing the capacity to monitor and evaluate the impact and outcome of development interventions of key institutions and stakeholders.
- Better communication of research findings in the academic and development media, but also in the public media indicating a move beyond the 'missionary' view of development to one based on human rights and justice in a global economy.

5. Rebalance to Community Focus:

The DSAI members fully support the strong poverty focus of Irish Aid. This requires a delicate balance of support to policies, processes and institutions required for long-term change, e.g. health systems strengthening, governance etc. and ensuring the poorest people are getting practical and short-term support to enable them to improve their lives and get out of poverty. The latter requires a continued engagement with civil society and community level institutions and processes. DSAI members believe that keeping this balance is important and should be actively committed to in the White Paper.

Other comments:

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