

Irish Coalition for Global Campaign for Education

Submission to Review of the White Paper on Irish Aid

1. Introduction

The Irish Coalition for the Global Campaign for Education is an alliance of teacher unions, development NGOs. Its membership currently includes the Action Aid Ireland, ASTI, Concern, and ICTU, INTO, KADE, National Youth Council of Ireland, Plan Ireland, SUAS, TUI, and VSO Ireland. The objective of the Coalition is to promote the Education For All goals arising from the Millennium Development Goals adopted by the international community in Dakar in 2000. The Coalition is a member of the Global Campaign for Education which is a key partner with UNESCO in seeking the achievement of Education for All - EFA goals. The Coalition works at governmental level, in the education sector and with civil society organisations to promote the EFA goals as we move towards 2015.

The submission from the Coalition focuses exclusively on education and its role in development cooperation policy. Education is a fundamental human right, it is an MDG commitment and it is an essential strategy to meet other policy objectives related to health, hunger and gender equality. It is an essential tool for breaking the intergenerational cycle poverty. It is *the* cross-cutting strategy for the achievement of Irish Aid's core goals of promoting gender equality, improving maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS, fighting hunger and malnutrition.

The Coalition has been concerned that education – both as an end in itself and as a cross-cutting policy measure – was not accorded a higher profile in the first White Paper. This low profile is puzzling given the many commitments to an integrated approach to development, as reflected for example, in the Guiding Principle of “*long-term sustainability*” (p.9) and in the statement that the “*Millennium Development Goals will guide Ireland's development cooperation policy*” (p.24). The low profile of education in the White Paper is also puzzling in the context of actual aid policy: in all of the programme countries of Irish Aid, education continues to be an important area for investment and partnership. For many Irish people, the role of Irish Aid in providing educational opportunities for children in sub-Saharan Africa is among the most resonant and enduring images of our aid programme.

2. Progress made

The 2006 White Paper makes specific commitments to the provision of high quality primary education, strengthening the capacity of education actors, and increasing access to education for girls. Irish Aid has undoubtedly contributed to significant improvements in primary education its programme countries. The DAC 2009 report noted that Irish Aid spends 37% of its gross bilateral ODA on social infrastructure and services, including education, compared to an OECD average of 33%. However, a diminishing proportion of this is going to education: 12% of its 2005-07 budget compared to 17% in 2000-04. This trend is reflected in Irish Aid country evaluation reports. Ireland has also, from the start, been a consistent contributor to the EFA Fast Track Funding Initiative and the successor Global Partnership for Education.

Irish Aid also supports education programmes of many NGOs. For example, Concern Worldwide was supported by Irish Aid to provide education programmes in some of the world's poorest countries including Burundi, Niger, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya, Mozambique, Haiti, Sierra Leone and Liberia.

3. Changing context

Globally, the changing context for education is graphically summarised in the opening line of the 2010 Brown Report as follows:

“The world is facing a hidden and silent emergency in education. In the midst of our increasingly knowledge-based and interconnected global economy, millions of children in the world’s poorest countries are out of school. Millions more are in school, but receiving an education of such abysmal quality that they are unlikely to gain even the most basic literacy and numeracy skills.” (1)

Despite the progress of the last decade in which many of the world’s poorest countries have registered extraordinary progress – cutting out-of-school numbers, reducing gender disparities and getting more children into secondary school – the global community is not on track in 2012 to meet the EFA goals by 2015. Gender and other inequalities remain unacceptably wide in education, in part because governments are not translating commitment to equity into practical policies. Insufficient weight has been attached to learning outcomes, with disastrous consequences for the quality of education. And while the ultimate responsibility for delivering on the promise of education for all rests with national governments, donors have not delivered on their aid commitments. There is a widespread perception that education is drifting down national and international agendas. UNESCO annual Global Monitoring Reports have documented the consistent shortfall in funding for education and have called on the international donors to meet their aid commitments.

The current context is not, however, entirely bleak. The establishment of the Global Partnership for Education is indicative of a renewed effort to meet the 2015 EFA goals. The 2012 World Bank Education Strategy 2020, *“Learning for All: Investing in People’s Knowledge and Skills to Promote Development”*, explicitly states that access to education is a strategic development investment:

“The human mind makes possible all other development achievements, from health advances and agricultural innovation to infrastructure construction and private sector growth. For developing countries to reap these benefits fully—both by learning from the stock of global ideas and through innovation—they need to unleash the potential of the human mind. And there is no better tool for doing so than education. (p1) (2)

Globally, new coalitions are emerging to drive a partnership for meeting the 2015 goals: the Global Compact on Learning initiative led by the Brookings Institute is a prominent example of cooperation between international aid agencies, NGOs, business groups and think-tanks. From the Irish perspective, there are already similar coalitions emerging involving important Irish actors such as Intel and Microsoft and agencies such as GESCI driven by Irish experts which represent a unique opportunity for Ireland to assume an international profile in progress towards achieving EFA goals. Under the paradigm of learning skills for the 21st century, the pace and depth of innovation in education has been phenomenal: new pedagogies are emerging as are approaches to teacher training. Funding models are increasingly harnessing private and public sector support and innovative solutions are now coming to scale in dealing with previously intractable problems such as out-of-school children having access to education. The reputation of Ireland can only be enhanced by assuming a lead role in this bottom-up innovation revolution which is moving the focus from *schooling* to *learning*. Ireland, through its huge diaspora and its location for leading global companies in ICT, is well positioned to capitalise on such opportunities. The next White Paper should seize the opportunity to position Ireland as a **global leader in innovation** for education.

4. Key Issues

The key issues identified in Irish Aid policy are hunger, fragility, climate change, basic needs, governance and human rights, and gender equality. The educational status of a population or community underpins – or undermines – the achievement of each one of these policy priorities. There is now a substantial international literature on education econometrics which documents the role of education in enabling societies to boost productivity and open doors to credit and jobs. A background paper prepared for the Global Partnership in Education Copenhagen Replenishment Conference in November, 2011 which was co-hosted by Irish Aid, provides a summary of the economic outcomes of education: (3)

- An individual's potential income can increase as much as 10% with each additional year of schooling.
- A farmer's productivity increases nearly 9% with 4 years of primary schooling.
- Annual GDP increases by 1% with each year of additional schooling.
- If all students in low income countries left school with basic reading skills 171 million people could be lifted out of poverty. This is equal to a 12% cut in global poverty.

The literature also underpins the role of education in promoting gender equality which in turn leads to better health outcomes, including reduced HIV/AIDS and other disease infection rates; reduced female fertility rates; better participation and retention rates in basic education. In addition to these positive social outcomes, education is vital in empowering women at local and national level. This development is vital to the achievement of more equal societies and the elimination of discrimination and prejudice against women. Higher levels of education are also associated with better governance structures and a stronger civil society: the latter are both identified as priority areas for Irish Aid.

Because education has such a “cross-cutting” role in helping to secure key objectives of Irish aid policy such as poverty reduction, food security, gender equality, combating HIV/AIDS, education must be viewed as a priority area for Irish Aid. Investing in education is an investment in people. The long-term benefits of such investment across a wide range of economic, health, civic and social indicators are, as noted above, well documented. In order for education to serve as a catalyst for progress across other development indicators, it needs to be identified as a **core goal** of aid policy. Without this prioritisation, there is a danger that it could become neglected in the operationalization of policy. It also needs specific **budgetary allocation** and **clear indicators** for measuring progress.

- **Income** increases with education
- More education is associated with **less inequality**
- Increased education is strongly related to **improved health**
- Better nourished children learn more, better educated children are **better nourished**
- More healthy children learn more, better educated children stay **more healthy**
- Better off families educate their children more, more educated children are **better off**
- In general, more educated societies are **more democratic**
- More educated societies have more **equitable wealth distribution**.

Education helps eradicate poverty

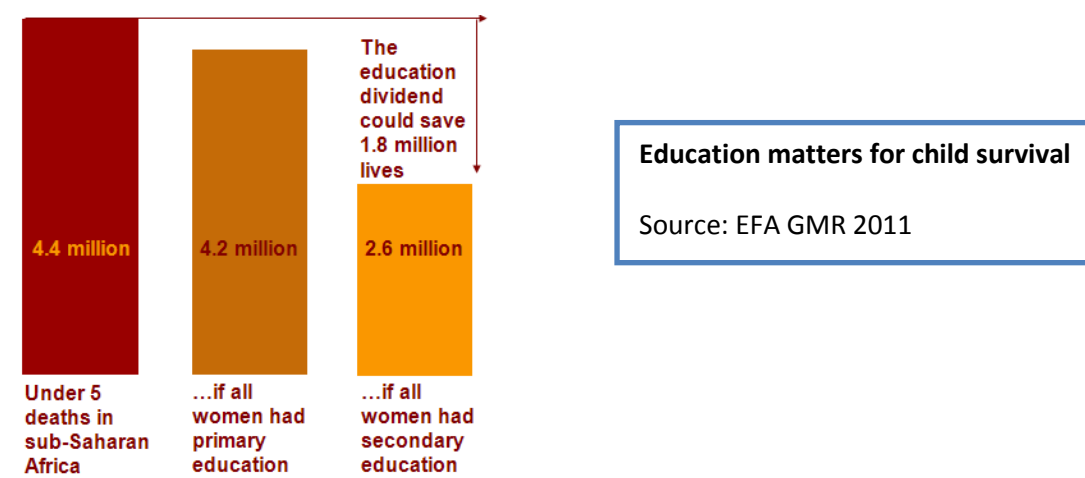
A lack of education is both a cause and a consequence of poverty. Due to poverty, people's opportunity to access quality education is limited. Without access to quality education, households have little opportunity of accessing jobs or credit. Access to quality education is not only critical to long term improvements in productivity, economic growth and reductions in inequality, but it is also a critical means of lifting households out of inter-generational poverty. Education gives people the knowledge and skills they need to better their lives. The Global Partnership for Education states that each year of schooling translates into a 10% increase in an individual's potential income. According to UNESCO, each additional year of schooling raises average annual gross domestic product (GDP) growth by 0.37%. Ensuring all students in low income countries left school with basic reading skills would result in a 12% cut in world poverty, lifting 171 million people out of poverty. (4) The

Education helps eradicate hunger

Education helps eradicate hunger and improve food security because it gives people access to jobs and credit: it also boosts productivity. However, the strong relationship between gender inequality and hunger suggests that reducing gender disparities in key areas, particularly in education and health, is essential to reducing hunger. The International Food Policy Research Institute has stated that yields of maize, beans and cowpeas could increase by up to 22%, if women farmers in Kenya were given the same level of education as men. (4) The Global Partnership for Education notes that 4 years of primary schooling can boost a farmer's productivity by nearly 9%. This shows the potential impact that education can have to increase the availability of food in developing countries. Increases in farming productivity coupled with increased income as highlighted above can have a real impact in the fight against hunger.

Education improves health, especially maternal health

Raising a household's level of education is strongly associated with improved health outcomes, in particular lower levels of child mortality and better nutrition. Every 10% point increase in girls' secondary enrolment in low income countries will save approximately 350,000 children's lives and reduce maternal mortality by 15,000 every year. The most effective investment for achieving long-term health benefits is educating girls and women. Children of educated mothers are more likely to be vaccinated. Children of mothers with secondary education or higher are twice as likely to survive beyond age 5. This means that 1.8 million children's lives could have been saved if their mothers have at least a secondary education. Empowerment through education is one of the strongest antidotes to maternal health risk. The Global Partnership for Education notes that 700,000 HIV cases could be prevented each year if all children received a primary education.



Education empowers women

Education is central to empowering girls and women. It enables them to develop their capabilities, improve their social status and earn a living. It enables girls and women to make informed decisions about maternal health, their children's health and education and their civil and human rights. Education can increase awareness of legal mechanisms to protect women from violations of these rights. Education can also transform unequal power relations which consistently play out in the home and communities. There is a powerful human rights argument and a strong developmental case for achieving gender equality in education. It is an affordable investment with high returns. When girls are educated, livelihoods are improved, education is valued, and civic responsibility is enhanced. In most societies, however, deep-seated inequalities result in unequal access to and performance in education. Education is central to the achievement of Irish Aid's core policy objective of gender equality and the empowerment of women

Education helps re-build fragile states

Children in conflict-affected and fragile states represent 24% of all children in the poorest countries: 47% of out-of-school children are in the poorest countries. Violent conflict is one of the greatest development challenges facing the international community. Beyond the immediate human suffering it causes, it is a source of poverty, inequality and economic stagnation. Children and education systems are often on the front line of violent conflict. Armed conflict is robbing 28 million children of an education by exposing them to widespread sexual violence, targeted attacks on schools and other abuses. The 2011 UNESCO GMR – *"The Hidden Crisis: Armed Conflict and Education"*, provides an authoritative analysis of the damaging consequences of conflict for the Education for All goals. Drawing on experience from a range of countries, it identifies problems and sets out solutions that can help make education a force for peace, social cohesion and human dignity. It notes that Education accounts for just 2% of humanitarian aid and calls on governments and donor agencies to invest in education in these states as an essential first step in helping to rebuild shattered lives, communities and economies.

Education is vital for human well-being

As well as being a key strategy for achieving other policy commitments, education should be a policy priority in its own right. As noted in the Brown Report, the international community should not underestimate the power of learning in generating the "three-e" effect: empowerment, efficiency, equity:

"Perhaps more than any other human development investment, it is through education that individuals can acquire the capabilities that can transform their lives". (p.8)

Building on the progress made to date; the Coalition proposes that future aid policy give explicit attention to education as the cross-cutting policy measure and focus on the key issues below.

As noted in the Brown Report, despite the progress to date, the data points unequivocally towards a twin crisis in *access to school* and *learning in school*. Quantitative progress in expanding access has outstripped **qualitative progress** in improving learning achievement. However, the two dimensions of the crisis are linked. One of the reasons that so many children drop out of school after the early grades is that they have not mastered the basic reading and numeracy skills that they need to progress to higher levels. And many parents keep their children out of school because they know that education systems are failing their children. Aid to education in programme countries must focus on the quality dimension. Central to this is the

issue of the **supply, recruitment and retention of trained teachers**. Sub-Saharan Africa alone faces a shortage of around 1 million teachers. Too few teachers have the training, support and skills they need to support effective learning in the classroom. Too many teachers have no specialist training, are badly remunerated and do not enjoy security of remuneration. These deficits make a direct contribution to the education quality problems outlined above.

In terms of **education infrastructure**, there are chronic shortages of classrooms and facilities across the school systems of the poorest countries. On one estimate, an additional 4 million classrooms will be needed by 2015. And it is not just physical infrastructure that is lacking: chronic shortages of textbooks and good-quality teaching materials is clearly a recipe for underachievement.

Financing of education is critical. Planning for education requires predictable finance. The costs of paying teachers, providing school buildings and learning resources such as textbooks, establishing quality in education systems, stretch over many years.

A focus on **learning outcomes** is vital. Insufficient attention has been paid in national planning to learning achievement, as distinct from getting children into school. Changing this approach will require far-reaching reforms, including a far stronger focus on early grade reading, numeracy and literacy – the foundational skills for lifelong learning. Similarly, while many governments attach great weight to equal opportunity in their policy statements, all too often these statements are not backed by practical policies to target and support marginalized groups.

Getting **girls into school** is a vital first step, but to receive the full benefits of education girls must continue to attend classes. Ensuring meaningful access involves minimising drop-out. Keeping girls at school is an essential pre-requisite to promoting women's literacy, women's empowerment and ultimately achieving gender equality. Irish Aid must focus support on addressing the barriers to girls' education and the social and cultural reasons that force girls to leave school early.

Although primary school enrolment rates for girls are increasing, completion rates for girls and **transition to secondary education** remain low and there is growth in gender disparity at higher levels of education. The focus on primary has had marked success in increasing enrolment rates. However, this success risks being negated or even reversed if those who made sacrifices to send their daughters to school do not see the associated benefits. As the benefits of education are more pronounced with every year of schooling, particularly at second level, it is essential that transition to secondary school is included as a policy priority for Irish Aid.

Almost half of the 67 million out of school children live in **fragile or conflict-affected states**. Irish Aid should include a specific commitment to supporting education in these states.

As we move towards 2015 – the date set by the international community for the achievement of the Education for All Goals – Ireland has a unique opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to the achievement of these goals in the next White Paper. Globally, Ireland has a strong reputation for its commitment to education. We should build on this reputation in the next White Paper by identifying education as the primary cross-cutting policy catalyst for development and by explicitly affirming our support for the achievement of the Education for All Goals by 2015 via our continued support for the Global Partnership in Education.

5. Ways of Working

More and better aid for education: The Coalition believes that political will must be combined with targeted investment to achieve the 6 Education for All Goals. Ireland can demonstrate this political will by making education a central policy area in its future aid policy. This would send a strong message to both the programme countries and to the broader international community of the importance of investing in education as a means of achieving other development goals. Ireland can also demonstrate its support for education by continued support for the Global Partnership for Education. Ireland should deliver on its GPE pledge and should likewise deliver on its commitment to 0.7% of GDP to overseas aid by 2015.

Focus on results: It is essential to focus on results and accountability: each commitment to education should have clear targets, expected outcomes, indicators and allocated budget. The EFA movement has highlighted how progress can be made when aid effectiveness principles are adhered to. By encouraging country-led education planning, it has strengthened national systems of educational planning based in particular on improved financial planning systems. This has led donors such as Irish Aid to align their work more closely with national governments. Tanzania, an Irish Aid programme country is a strong case in point. The Primary Education Development Programme supported measures such as the abolition of school fees in 2001, capitation grants for primary schools and a major classroom construction programme. Government and donor coordination through a pooled fund and subsequently through general budgetary support has strengthened planning and ensured increased spending on education (from 2% of GNP in 1999 to 6.8% in 2008). These developments have contributed to a dramatic decline in the numbers of primary-school age children out of school.

Working with Civil Society: A major pillar of the Global Campaign for Education, of which the Irish Coalition is a member, is the involvement of civil society organisations at national and local level in developing countries in advocating for implementation of national education strategies for Education for All. Their role is, for example, formally incorporated into the Global Partnership for Education three-year strategy. Support to Local Education Groups through partnership with Civil Society organisation is essential to ensure local ownership and participative development of Education plans. CSO partners can also hold the government to account to deliver on commitments made in those plans. This growing empowerment of civil society across the developing world is now an acknowledged goal of development cooperation policy, including several references in the Busan Outcomes Document, and is strongly articulated in Irish Aid's policy.

Notwithstanding this trend, there is no cause for optimism that such civil society organisations are accorded a public space to engage in advocacy in many developing countries. Referring exclusively to civil society organisations involved in the Education for All movements, there is evidence, for example, that teacher unions in particular are frequently subjected to repressive government actions, including harassment of activists, banning of public meetings and other repressive measures. Civil society organisations are vital for democracy and good governance. Therefore, it is very important that Irish Aid policy continues to underline their importance not just in the development project but in the wider project of better governance, respect for human rights and equality.

Development education is a vital dimension of Irish Aid development aid policy: The Coalition believes that the next White Paper must continue to give strong emphasis to development education, taking into consideration the recommendations arising from its two internal reviews. This is necessary not just to engage public support for overseas aid, but more fundamentally, to ensure that Irish citizens are empowered to understand our inter-connected world. Development Education is ultimately about education for empowerment: as such it is fundamental to the concepts of solidarity, of justice and universal human rights which are germane to human development.

6. Summary

The Irish Coalition for the Global Campaign for Education believes that there is a compelling case for the next White Paper to prioritise support for education in Irish development aid. Education is a basic human right: it must be given priority, not least because it is a human right particularly important to the most vulnerable population group vulnerable in society – children, in particular female children, and the 80 million children worldwide engaged in child labour. Because education has such a direct impact on human well-being, from increased health to increased productivity, it must be identified as the core cross-cutting policy measure in the next White Paper. Ireland should build on its strong reputation as a nation which has built its own successes on its people talents to serve as a global role model. The White Paper should not only identify education as the catalyst for the achievement of all development goals: it should also make a strong statement of Ireland's commitment to the achievement of the Education for All Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

References

- (1) *"Delivering on the promise, building opportunity: the case for a Global Fund for Education"*, A review by Gordon Brown, 2010
- (2) *"Learning for All: Investing in People's Knowledge and Skills to Promote Development"*, World Bank Education Strategy, 2012
- (3) *"The value of education"*, Global Partnership for Education,
- (4) *"Education Counts: Towards the Millennium Development Goals"*, UNESCO 2011
- (5) *"Reaching the marginalised"*, Global Monitoring Report, UNESCO, 2010