

## **Consultation - Review of White Paper on Irish Aid**

### **Introduction**

**The Irish Missionary Union (IMU)** is the representative body of Irish missionaries. We have 85 member organisations comprised of sisters, priests, brothers, and three of our organisations are lay run, engaged in sending lay volunteers overseas and in supporting the work of missionaries.

Currently, there are 1,700 Irish-born missionaries ministering overseas. In addition to this, there are about 3,000 local or indigenous missionaries who are members of Irish-led congregations. This makes for over 4,500 ‘field workers’ with a vast array of skills and experiences.

Missionaries have been a hugely important channel for the distribution of Irish development funding, for example, into the most remote areas. Missionaries, irrespective of their country of birth, remain such a channel that can deliver good practice development and value for money for the Irish state and taxpayers.

**Misean Cara** is an Irish company established by the Irish Missionary Union with encouragement from Irish Aid. Its purpose is to distribute an annual grant from Irish Aid to missionaries and to encourage and to support their diverse development interventions amongst the poorest of the poor in remote areas of developing countries.

The Misean Cara company structure provides protection and accountability for the management of public funds. It has a board of 11 directors – the majority of whom are independent of the membership - who bring a diverse range of expertise and experience to the governance of the organisation. Misean Cara avails of external professional expertise on its Governance and on its Audit Committees of the Board. It works to a 3-year strategic plan and an annual work programme agreed with Irish Aid. It holds regular meetings with officials of Irish Aid to monitor progress.

In addition to the distribution of the public grant, Misean Cara encourages and facilitates capacity building amongst its members, their partners on the ground and the end beneficiaries. In line with the Irish Aid White Paper, this process aims to support the efforts of missionary organisations to plan for the future and adapt to the changing development environment.

### **Justice and Faith-based Values:**

Missionaries work towards a world of justice and peace where the rights of individuals are respected, and their dignity is ensured. These Christian values underpin all our development interventions amongst the poor and the marginalised.

We believe that the Irish Aid programme must continue to facilitate people being helped to have control over their own lives, and enable civil society groups to grow and to prosper, i.e. local ownership of development and aid programmes is essential.

### **Progress Made**

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

Whilst the 0.7% of GDI to ODA is off target, Ireland can be proud of the accomplishments which have resulted from our commitment to supporting the poorest of the poor of our world. Much has been accomplished but much remains to be done.

In recent years the Irish Government has done an enormous amount of work in analyzing and attempting to respond to the reality of hunger in our world. Future plans must include building on the recommendations contained in the 2008 Hunger Task Force as an integral element of our foreign policy.

In the context of the missionary work being supported by Irish Aid, good progress has been made in 'bottom-up locally-owned-development' at community level that meets the objectives of Irish Aid and the principles laid down in the White Paper.

### **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?**

As Ireland puts more emphasis on trade with Africa – we question the balance in the Africa Strategy document – it is essential that aid does not become in any way tied to trade. It will also be important in trading arrangements that ethical standards will be used for sustainable trade that helps to uplift local enterprises and communities in developing countries.

Based on evidence in areas such as inequality, social exclusion, and human rights we believe that Ireland should put greater focus in these areas, and should mainstream gender inequality to offer increased support to women and girls.

Following the Busan consensus, the emphasis on aid effectiveness must now move to development effectiveness.

The consequences of global warming will inevitably affect many more people in the developing world in the years ahead and will dictate where a sizable quantity of Irish Aid will be spent in future years. A greater commitment is needed at the level of governments and government departments in addressing this global phenomenon if the positive results of aid are to be maintained, i.e. there must be joined-up thinking to maximize the impact of more limited resources.

### **Key Issues**

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

1. **Education and Empowerment** of people is the key. Without education it is difficult to ensure improvement in the quality of lives of many people which in turn excludes them from being able to compete for their rights in our fast-changing world. This has repercussions for health care, for without information and knowledge those in remote areas or slums will be excluded from vital services. Education and empowerment needs to be extended to skills training and agriculture as such development provides employment and serves to take care of our planet. Without this understanding and care of the earth, will there be food to eat or a place to live?  
Formal education programmes especially at secondary level need to have a strong advocacy bias. Education is a right for all but many are deprived of it. Many well educated people pull up the ladder after them and forget the needy.

They must now learn, as part of the secondary school curriculum, about their obligation to help those deprived of it

- 2 **Combating HIV/Malaria:** These two diseases are crippling as days are lost at work and are a massive drain on medical resources. They are the biggest causes of Infant Mortality and death among the work force in Sub-Sahara Africa. While ARVs are available in many areas and help to prolong life, they are costly and require a good diet if they are to be effective; even now the supply is inadequate.

While continuing to care for people with AIDS, programmes for prevention addressing the root causes need to be stepped up. Many cases of malaria can be prevented through community initiatives such as removing stagnant water, harvesting rain water, keeping the surroundings clean, spraying swamps, and educating people to use nets.

- 3 **Family Income-Generating (IGA) Projects:** There is some ambivalence around IGAs; some believe this type of project needs a greater investment into the future if the poor are to be encouraged to raise their standard of living. However, much work still needs to be done to research the effectiveness of IGAs. Many have not worked as the investment often yields only small returns. It is known that Co-Ops tend to fail in many parts of Africa whereas some family income-generating projects have thrived. Could these projects be combined with Vocational and Agricultural Training programmes so as to be more effective in the IGA tasks undertaken? What does it take to become self-reliant or an entrepreneur? One can argue that this is about sustainability but many IGAs need much support at grass root level, perhaps as many resources need to be spent by the supporting organisation as on the IGAs themselves.
- 4 **Advocacy Training** is very necessary so that people know their rights and are equipped to address and confront corruption. Any responsible aid programme has to find local culturally appropriate ways to communicate the important human values which underline our commitment to human rights.
- 5 **Invest in Leadership Training and Conflict Resolution:** In many developing countries war continues to destroy progress made in development, increases poverty and funds, which should be used to develop people, are instead used to buy arms. Irish Aid should consider investing more in conflict resolution programmes in order to ensure the political stability necessary for real economic and social stability. Governments need to be encouraged to take responsibility for Leadership Training and Conflict Resolution.
- 6 **Drugs, alcohol abuse and the trafficking of peoples:** These issues must be addressed as ongoing concerns within any true development programme. Regular educational seminars should be considered in order to address better law enforcement in the community. We could possibly consider rewarding governments in countries where rates of abuse have gone down or if they can show a proactive stance regarding these issues.
- 7 **Support Developing Countries to become Financially Independent:** Despite receiving some debt cancellation, developing countries continue to experience high levels of debt distress. Debt cancellation schemes have not cancelled enough debts, have been accompanied by damaging loan policy conditions and have excluded many countries that are in need of debt

cancellation. The problem of unjust and illegitimate debt has also still not been addressed. Many developing countries require increased debt cancellation and support toward debt audits in order to ascertain the legitimacy, or otherwise, of their outstanding external debts. It is important to note that developing countries continue to be highly debt dependent because they are losing billions of euro each year through tax evasion by multi-national companies. These urgently needed funds are being lost due to lack of adequate financial reporting standards to hold multi-national companies to account.

### **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?**

- a. Have stricter regulation and monitoring of money for projects especially for large amounts given to governments.
- b. Have a ceiling on salaries for people who are sponsored by Irish Aid.
- c. Have good monitoring to ensure that the intended work is being fulfilled.
- d. Instead of supporting large salaries for UN personnel, invest more in volunteers or Irish graduates in the field.
- e. Give increased support to development interventions on the ground rather than large government projects.
- f. In responding to agriculture, rural development and food security issues, Ireland with an abundance of skills in food production, processing, marketing, and exporting should be able to provide skill transfers to help medium to long term economic development in rural communities in the developing world. Irish Aid could facilitate such skills transfers.

### **Other Comments**

1. We would like to see multi-annual aid funding being made available that could support missionary projects or programmes that are longer than one year. That would facilitate better planning and implementation.
2. In the light of our unfortunate experience in Ireland re the safeguarding of children, all Irish Aid projects into the future should seek to promote the safeguarding of children and guard against all types of abuse especially sexual exploitation.
3. Irish Aid continues to recognise the importance of improving development education among the citizens of Ireland. Missionaries are actively engaged in development education at many levels. They actively promote mission and development when speaking in every parish throughout Ireland at least once every two years. This promotion not only explains development issues but seeks engagement by citizens through monetary support or volunteering.

The government should continue to offer support to all civil society organisations and NGO's who devote significant time and effort to raising this awareness at home. Irish Aid efforts should go beyond just awareness and seek active engagement by citizens.

4. There is now an even greater need for policy coherence for development to ensure that "developed countries" policies in areas such as trade, climate change and security do not undermine development. This means that the Irish government must strengthen its commitment to an all-government approach to

development policy by specifying how the coherence of trade and other international policies with development goals will be reflected across government departments and agencies. This coherence remains the key to the achievement of the MDGs.

5. We believe that the Government should make plans to establish the 0.7% of GDI for ODA by 2015.
6. Missionaries would encourage the government to resist any pressure to introduce conditions as a prerequisite for aid.
7. The Irish government should advocate for increased debt cancellation for developing countries that need it and support action against unjust and illegitimate debts. The Irish government should also support the long term goal of ending loan policy conditionality and instead support the development of internationally binding fair and responsible lending and borrowing standards. Ireland's position should be outlined in an updated government policy on international debt. Ireland should also be a strong advocate for international tax justice through supporting country-by-country financial reporting for multi-national companies internationally and automatic information exchange between jurisdictions on tax matters.

### **Conclusion**

Irish missionaries appreciate the funding provided by Irish Aid to Mísean Cara which in 2011 supported 344 projects in 49 countries. This is of significant assistance to our missionary organisations and provides added value to the funding provided by the missionaries themselves and other donor organisations. These sources of funding allow missionaries to commit to basic education and primary health (incl. HIV / AIDS) care, as well as urban development and rural development interventions, enterprise development, water/sanitation, and human rights.

We submit that indigenous missionaries will remain an important ... and a good value for money ... channel of distribution for Irish aid funds using good development practice amongst the very poor and marginalised, including remote areas of the world. We commit ourselves, in partnership with Irish Aid, to continuing into the future the pioneering work that has been undertaken by our missionaries over many decades.

**END**