

2. Introduction

Oxfam Ireland's vision is a just world without poverty. Our mission is to increase the numbers of people in developing countries having a sustainable livelihood, access to essential services, equal rights and status, and physical security.

We are a member of Oxfam International, a confederation of 17 organisations operating together in over 90 countries. Working with thousands of local partner organizations, we work with people living in poverty striving to exercise their human rights, assert their dignity as full citizens and take control of their lives.

Oxfam Ireland is pleased to participate in the Irish Aid White Paper review. In preparing our submission, we consulted staff and partners in Malawi, Tanzania and Uganda. We have also drawn on the expertise and experience of Oxfam staff around the world.

3. Progress made: Has the Government been successful in implementing the commitments contained in the White Paper in Irish Aid?

As highlighted in Annex A of the Consultation Paper for the White Paper Review, considerable progress has been made on many fronts over the past five years. Ireland has been an effective champion on the issue of hunger and food security on the global stage. The OECD's continued high ranking of Ireland's aid programme is very laudable. We can be proud of Ireland's leadership on HIV and AIDS at the international level and Ireland's ongoing commitment to combating the HIV and AIDS epidemic is commendable. Likewise Irish Aid's work to mainstream gender across all its programmes and its focus on empowering women is very welcome.

There has been insufficient progress however, towards meeting Millennium Development Goal 8, a global partnership for development. For example, since 2005 the Doha development round of trade negotiations has been at an impasse and significant concerns have been raised by developing country governments in relation to the Economic Partnership Agreements EU member states are negotiating with them. Similarly, the reduction in Overseas Development Assistance in recent years has been of particular concern and must be addressed if we are to fulfil the promise we made in 2000 to spend 0.7% of GNI on ODA by 2015.

Given the changing context in Ireland and internationally, Ireland's overseas aid programme needs to focus on addressing the underlying causes of **hunger and food insecurity**. Empowering **women** and achieving **gender equality** will be critical. A rights based approach to development should continue to underpin Irish Aid's work. The focus must be on sustainable development. Supporting **civil society** in their efforts to improve **governance and accountability** within programme countries is key.

Back home, the Government must ensure policies pursued domestically, in Europe and beyond do not undermine Irish Aid's commendable contribution to the fight against global poverty and Ireland's values as a nation.

4. 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?

A key development challenge for the next decade is rising **inequality**. In many countries with rising economic growth, the numbers of people living in poverty are not falling. The principles of 'sustainability' and 'equity' are increasingly subordinated to that of 'growth'. In Oxfam's view, the greatest cause of ongoing high poverty levels in countries that are growing economically is the political, economic and social marginalisation of particular groups within society. Ensuring economic growth is pro-poor and sustainable will necessitate empowering marginalised people, giving them a political voice and redistributing resources to them

Competition for land, water, energy and carbon space is becoming acute and putting unsustainable pressure on the world's most critical resources. This competition for **scarce resources** threatens the food availability and secure livelihoods of hundreds of millions of women and men living in poverty. By 2030, global demand for water is expected to rise by 30 per cent, and demand for food and energy both by 50 per cent.¹ This growing demand is being driven by policies that prioritise economic growth in the short term over sustainable growth in the future. It is also being generated by a potent combination of population growth, urbanisation, rising incomes and changing diets, and competition from other uses, for example, food production being reduced by non-food uses of arable land for carbon sequestration and biofuels production.² It threatens to overwhelm the clear limits to the planet's resources, especially in relation to agricultural land, fresh water and the atmosphere's absorptive capacity.

Oxfam believes addressing the issue of scarcity will entail examining the power dynamics and interests that threaten the world's resources and placing a renewed focus on the political dimensions of hunger. It will necessitate the building of national and global food systems that are more just and equitable, less wasteful, more productive, sustainable and resilient to shocks. It means addressing how land and water are used and governed, and redoubling efforts to stabilise the world's climate and support poor people to adapt to the now unavoidable impacts of climate change. It entails placing a renewed focus on sustainable development, recognising there are clear limits to the planet's resources.

Despite the improvements at the national level in legal and policy frameworks relating to **gender** – 139 constitutions now guarantee gender equality – the face of global poverty and injustice today is still female. Seventy percent of the 1.3 billion people who live in extreme poverty are women and girls. Women remain under-represented at nearly all levels of decision-making and in many instances lack control over their bodies and lives, despite the policies and laws which are intended to enshrine these rights. Women's rights must be put back at the heart of the international development agenda and strategies to empower women and tackle discrimination and violence against women adequately resourced.

¹ Oxfam (2012) *A Safe And Just Space For Humanity*

² FAO (2009) *How To Feed The World in 2050*

The last decade has been marked by multiple, often simultaneous ‘shocks to the system’: a global food crisis, spikes in oil prices, a global economic crisis and an increasingly volatile climate. In this new **era of volatility**, powerful forces are also emerging to secure assets and resources for themselves. In the midst of these crises, conflicts and shocks, the poor are often shorn of their assets and their traditional coping mechanisms are overwhelmed. Already these challenges are outstripping the capacity of humanity’s safety net – the humanitarian system and principles – and the resources designed to assist and protect those affected by disasters and conflict. The resilience and coping mechanisms of the poor must be bolstered and the capacity of local actors to prepare and respond to shocks increased. Policies to reduce food price volatility must also be pursued at the international level.

We now live in a **multi-polar world** with shifting and unfamiliar configurations. In particular, the growing influence of the BRICSAM (Brazil, India, China, South Africa, Mexico) countries and G20 will provide new opportunities and challenges for international development. Other new actors have emerged in the development space including ‘at scale’ philanthropists, social entrepreneurs, investors and Arab states. Civil society is rapidly evolving through new social movements using digital communications and with greater access to real-time information. The influence of the private sector in global power dynamics continues to grow rapidly. In some cases the operations of the private sector can serve to further entrench poverty and inequality, however the private sector can play a pivotal role in addressing the challenges of scarcity and inequality through contributing to sustainable pro-poor economic development. As all of these new actors enter into development cooperation it is critical the principles of human rights, democracy, equity and poverty reduction remain at the heart of Ireland’s overseas aid programme. The White Paper must place issues of governance, accountability and sustainable approaches to economic growth at its core.

In Ireland, the ongoing economic crisis and the resulting cuts to the aid budget underlines the imperative of identifying new sources of financing for development so that we will meet and maintain our commitment to spending 0.7% of GNI on poverty eradication.

Given the changes in the global and domestic context highlighted above and the increased demands they bring, Irish Aid must maintain a **poverty focus** in all its programmes, using a **rights based approach** to development that addresses issues of **equity, governance, accountability and gender inequality** and that promotes **civil society**. Ensuring more **sustainable models of development** are pursued within Ireland and internationally will be of critical importance in the coming years.

5.0 Key Issues

5.1 Hunger

Hunger and poverty in developing countries remain concentrated in rural areas. Unlocking the potential of smallholder agriculture – the backbone of the food system - represents the single biggest opportunity to increase food production, boost food security, reduce vulnerability and achieve food justice.³ Women and men food producers must have access to the resources they need to thrive: water, land, technology, investment and credit, among others. Better governance is also needed at the international level, to increase transparency in commodities and future markets, to scale up food reserves, regulate financial speculators and combat climate change. With this in mind, Ireland must take a comprehensive approach to tackling hunger and achieving food justice and develop a strategy which will:

- Build on the EU's policy framework of advancing food security in developing countries, addressing in particular the needs of smallholder women and men farmers.
- Highlight the need for an all government approach on hunger to ensure policies pursued in Ireland and internationally in relation to climate change, trade, biofuels, financial markets among others, do not exacerbate hunger and poverty in developing countries.
- Place a renewed focus on addressing the political dimensions of hunger.
- Support the work programme of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS).
- Articulate how Ireland can help implement the findings of the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) report.

5.1.2 Land

Recent years have seen increased competition for land, particularly in countries with weak land governance and a high prevalence of food insecurity.⁴ The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) estimate that in the last three years 20 million hectares have been acquired by foreign interests in Africa alone. Addressing the issue of land tenure and usage will be of critical importance to combating hunger and food insecurity in Sub Saharan Africa in the coming years. To this end, Irish Aid should:

- Incorporate a focus on land tenure and usage in its hunger strategy, placing a particular emphasis on women and land issues, including indirect land use change.
- Take leadership within the EU to advance specific recommendations on the removal of subsidies and mandates on biofuels production and processing.
- Articulate explicit support for the recommendations made in the High Level Panel of Experts report on Land Tenure and International Investments in Agriculture (FAO Committee on Food Security 2011).

³ Oxfam (2011) *Growing A Better Future: Food Justice In A Resource-Constrained World* Available at <http://www.oxfam.org/en/grow/reports>

⁴ Oxfam (2011) *Land And Power* Available at <http://www.oxfam.org/en/grow/policy/land-and-power>

- With priority countries in Africa, support implementation of the African Union Land Policy Guidelines.
- Engage proactively in the implementation and monitoring of the Committee on Food Security's Voluntary Guidelines on Land Use and the principles for responsible investment in 2012.

5.1.3 Pastoralism

Ireland's strategy to address hunger should continue to support pastoralists, who remain marginalised and insufficiently represented in decision-making fora in a number of Irish Aid programme countries. To this end, Irish Aid should:

- Support the recognition of pastoralism, and associated strategic mobility, as an appropriate sustainable livelihoods system in drylands and areas of high rainfall variability in Sub Saharan Africa.⁵
- Continue to support pastoralism in Africa – both regionally, and at focus country level - through the provision of support to enhance the economic contribution of pastoralists, tackle their marginalisation and enable them to realise their rights.
- At EU level, support the development of a long-term vision on strengthening the economic development of the arid and semi-arid areas—recognising mobile pastoralism as a production system with high comparative advantage—in the framework of the EU programmes for food security, climate change, the national indicative programmes and other relevant EU policies such as the Green Paper.

5.2 Fragility

In an increasingly fragile and volatile world, the humanitarian project is needed now more than ever. But in the twenty-first century, in a world no longer dominated by the West, humanitarianism must rediscover its local and global roots. Oxfam believes the future of humanitarian action lies increasingly in the global South: in the governments, civil societies, faith-based and private organizations, and others of crisis-affected regions.⁶

International humanitarian actors will be as vital as ever. But their greatest responsibility will be to help build and learn from that Southern capacity. They should complement this capacity in their own operations, so that the government and civil society of affected states can at last take their rightful place at the forefront of global humanitarian action.

Irish Aid should:

- make timely and appropriate responses to warnings of emerging disasters;
- assess needs and deliver aid impartially and independently; strive to be sensitive to the specific vulnerabilities of gender, age and disability;
- promote the participation of women and children, and all vulnerable groups in humanitarian aid;

⁵African Union (2011) *Policy Framework for Pastoralism in Africa*

⁶Oxfam (2012) *Crises In A New World Order* Available at <http://www.oxfam.org/en/policy/crises-new-world-order>

- ensure aid is more accountable to those who have been affected; put a greater focus on building local capacity and on disaster risk reduction;
- when faced with difficult dilemmas make transparent decisions based on the best possible judgement on the consequences of different courses of humanitarian action.

5.3 Climate Change

Deep reductions in global greenhouse gas emissions and significant scaling up of support for adaptation and low carbon development are critical and urgent in order to tackle climate change.

In order to be just and effective, all countries must act according to their responsibility and capacity, with a focus on protecting and promoting the human rights of the most vulnerable people.⁷ Furthermore, effective action on climate change is inherently linked to and dependant on a shift in both developed and developing countries to development models which are socially, environmentally and economically sustainable.

Irish Aid should:

- Advocate and pursue a justice approach to climate action, recognising the implications this has across Government policy and action, ensuring domestic action is both ambitious and effective, including the full implementation of the '*Framework for Sustainable Development for Ireland*'.⁸
- Advocate for effective GHG emission reductions in Ireland and support stronger emission reductions within the EU, recognising the implications of current low levels of ambition for vulnerable people in developing countries.
- Scale up Ireland's contribution to mobilising long-term, secure, new and additional public finance for climate action in developing countries, with a particular focus on adaptation.
- Ensure Ireland takes a progressive position at the EU and the International Maritime Organisation on proposals to limit GHG emissions from the shipping sector and advocate for the mobilisation of finance from international shipping for the Green Climate Fund.⁹
- Advocate and pursue a rights-based, people-centred approach to ensure climate action investment at all levels is responsive and builds capacity and developmental co-benefits such as empowerment, food security and sustainable livelihoods. Identify and act on responses which threaten to exacerbate vulnerabilities or threaten human rights.
- Invest in small-scale women farmers given the disproportionate impacts they face from climate change, as well as their potential as a catalyst for promoting sustainable practices.

⁷ Oxfam (2009) *Hang Together Or Separately* Available at <http://www.oxfam.org/en/policy/fair-climate-deal-copenhagen>

⁸ Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (forthcoming) *A Framework For Sustainable Development For Ireland*

⁹ Oxfam (2011) *Out Of The Bunker: Time For A Fair Deal On Shipping Emissions* Available at <http://www.oxfam.org/en/grow/policy/out-bunker-shipping-emissions>

- Promote standardised, regular accounting and reporting on the sources and spending of climate finance flows, whether finance is new, additional to existing ODA commitments, the share of loans versus grants, and the distribution of climate finance between adaptation and mitigation.
- Promote the inclusion of human rights and social and environmental safeguards in the principles, policies, reporting and evaluation of climate finance flows, and the establishment of independent national and international level grievance and recourse mechanisms to ensure compliance.

5.4 Basic Needs

Oxfam believes the provision of good quality public services for all lies at the core of the contract between citizens and states; promoting fairer economic growth, equity (including gender), democracy and stability. Universal essential services like health, education, water and sanitation, can only be achieved through states taking responsibility for ensuring the provision of quality services for all, and protecting the weakest and the poorest in society. To achieve this, active citizens are needed to hold governments to account along with champions of progressive policy who create competition between states to meet their responsibilities to citizens. With this in mind Irish Aid should:

- Prioritise support to mechanisms that aim to develop the capacity of civil society organisations to better represent poor and marginalised people and to provide them with a platform from which they may demand their rights.
- Promote and support approaches to service provision that empower poor and marginalised people by enabling them to participate in related decision-making.
- Promote and support transparency in relation to the financing of essential services.

5.4.1 HIV and AIDs

34 million people today live with HIV. 68% of these live in Sub Saharan Africa, despite this region accounting for only 12% of the world's population. The number of people on treatment still only represents half of those who require it now, and insufficient attention is being given to the care and support of people living with and affected by HIV. Ireland can be proud of the leadership it has shown internationally on HIV and AIDs and the commitments made to HIV and AIDS in the overseas aid programme. It is imperative there is no roll-back of Ireland's and the international community's efforts to combat HIV and AIDs in the coming years. To this end, Irish Aid should:

- Commit to completing and publishing its HIV Policy and Strategy in consultation with country partners and civil society.
- Ensure HIV interventions respond to the particular vulnerabilities of women and girls to HIV.
- Uphold Ireland's financial commitments to HIV and AIDs work and ensure 20% of HIV related funding is allocated to children.
- Continue to support the work of the Global Fund to combat AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

- Ensure civil society organisations that represent the interests of those living with and affected by HIV, have an oversight and monitoring role in the delivery of HIV programmes.

5.5 Governance & Human Rights

Development at its core is about the compact between people and their governments. A human rights approach to development is about empowerment, participation and accountability, the right of citizens to access information that makes government policies, processes and finances more transparent. A human rights approach places the voices and experiences of poor and marginalised people at the heart of policy and programming. It makes poor people active participants in the development process, rather than passive recipients, and as such accords them dignity and status that is otherwise denied.

Ireland should continue to ensure governance and human rights underpins Ireland's overseas aid programme and the revised White Paper should:

- Commit to developing a clear governance policy which articulates Irish Aid's approach to human rights based development, to private sector accountability, to the role of civil society as an independent actor in development and to issues of global governance.
- Name the human rights principles which will inform Irish Aid's work and set out the mechanisms for integrating these into the planning, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of aid programmes and into other areas of government policy impacting on development.
- Articulate an approach to good governance that supports governments in their efforts to tackle corruption including justice sector reform; strengthens legal frameworks to facilitate access to information and supports civil society and the media so that citizens are empowered to demand transparency and accountability.
- Explicitly support international frameworks / initiatives such as the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) and the UN framework and guiding principles for business and human rights and encourage Irish private sector actors operating overseas to do likewise.

5.6 Gender Equality

Gender injustice is the root cause of why women and girls are disproportionately affected by poverty, are more vulnerable in times of crisis and suffer from all forms of discrimination. Seventy percent of the 1.3 billion people who live in extreme poverty are women and girls. Many cultures still marginalise and disadvantage women, while the food, fuel, climate and economic volatility of recent years have disproportionately affected women's livelihoods and purchasing power. Irish Aid has demonstrated leadership and commitment to addressing these issues and this should remain central in the revised White Paper.

To this end, Irish Aid should:

- Develop and adequately resource a Gender Equality Action Plan and report at two year intervals on progress made.
- Allocate increased resources to programmes that empower women and that bring about transformative changes to women's lives.
- Invest more in programmes that aim to bring about reforms in land ownership and tenure that benefit women.
- Fund women's cooperatives and rural women's associations who are uniquely placed to reach out and provide support to women farmers, so that they may increase yields, food security and income from agriculture.
- Provide specific funding to women's associations so that they can participate in developing national agricultural and food security strategies.
- Invest more in programmes that tackle domestic violence against women and other forms of Gender Based Violence.
- Ensure to implementation of the National Action Plan on UN Security Resolution 1325 and establish an independent monitoring body to oversee this work.

5.7 Private Sector

For many years Oxfam has been engaging with the private sector in programme countries through supporting business related initiatives of farmers' groups, women's micro enterprises, fair trade initiatives and local enterprise development. More recently Oxfam has also placed an increased emphasis on private sector governance initiatives to ensure businesses operate in a socially and environmentally responsible manner so that the benefits they bring by offering goods and services, jobs and incomes, access to markets, and tax contributions are not undermined by operations and behaviours that abuse human rights, cause environmental degradation or perpetuate corruption and bad governance.

In Oxfam's experience, the private sector's direct contributions towards poverty alleviation are greatest when poor people are able to participate within it as entrepreneurs, producers, workers or consumers in ways that enable them to partake successfully in markets, equitably capture the value and wealth created, and consequently lift themselves out of poverty. In addition, governments must effectively organise and regulate private sector activities so that value and wealth is distributed equitably and that social and environmental harm resulting from these activities is minimised.¹⁰ With this in mind, Irish Aid should:

- Ensure ODA support to the private sector is demonstrably pro-poor, sustainable, respects human rights and ultimately helps poor people lift themselves out of poverty.
- Ensure ODA remains 100% untied and is not provided to trans-national corporations or Irish profit-making private businesses for activities in Ireland or overseas.
- Support the capacity and right of developing countries to regulate the activities of corporations on environmental, labour, social, taxation, profit-sharing and development grounds.

¹⁰ Oxfam (2008) *The Private Sector And Poverty Reduction* Available at <http://www.oxfam.org/en/policy/fp2p/background-papers#privatesector>

- Continue to work with the taxing authorities of Southern countries to expand their capacity following the model established with Rwanda.
- Strengthen Ireland's position on international tax evasion through enhanced tax transparency and improved measures to combat capital flight.¹¹
- Sign up to the Extractives Industries Transparency Index and work to encourage Irish businesses and business networks to do likewise.
- Support access to justice for communities in developing countries which are negatively affected by private sector investment.

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

Oxfam believes Irish Aid should continue to prioritise hunger and food security in the new White Paper. As highlighted in section 5.1, a comprehensive approach that addresses the underlying causes of hunger is required. This includes prioritising smallholder agriculture, ensuring women and men food producers have access to land and other critical resources, recognising and supporting pastoralism as a viable livelihood option, and better governance of policies at the international level that exacerbate hunger and food insecurity.

Promoting gender equality and mainstreaming gender equality must be at the heart of Irish Aid's future aid programme. As outlined in section 5.6, increased investments must be made in programmes that empower women, tackle discrimination and combat gender based violence.

Increasing competition for scarce resources threatens the food availability and secure livelihoods of hundreds of millions of women and men living in poverty. The impacts and challenges posed by climate change exacerbate these pressures. A commitment to sustainable development must underpin the new White Paper and an equitable and just approach to tackling climate change articulated, as highlighted in section 5.3

6.0 Ways of Working

6.1 Towards Better Policy Coherence

Aid is necessary and important, and can play a vital role as a catalyst for development processes. But aid alone cannot bring about the type of transformation and long term sustainable development that is required to eradicate poverty.

The principle of "policy coherence for development", which was articulated in the 2006 White Paper, must remain to the fore in the revised White Paper. As highlighted in this submission, there are range of policies being pursued at national, EU and international levels – e.g. on energy, climate change, trade, taxation, financial markets among others – which militate against poverty eradication and sustainable development in developing countries.

¹¹ Killian, S., (2011) *Driving The Getaway Car? Ireland, Tax and Development*

To ensure greater policy coherence for development (PCD) across the Irish Government, Irish Aid should:

- Articulate in the White Paper the principles that underpin Ireland's approach to policy coherence for development.
- Strengthen the Inter-Departmental Committee on Development (IDCD) as a mechanism for dealing with PCD, including granting the Minister of State for Trade and Development an additional mandate to address issues of PCD.
- Invite Irish NGOs to participate in IDCD meetings at regular intervals and provide a contact point within Government for Irish NGOs to raise PCD issues on an ongoing basis.
- Report every two years on policies across Government, in line with EC reporting, to identify examples of any policies which undermine the Government's development agenda and recommend corrective actions in relation to them.

6.2 Working with Civil Society Organisations

Civil society plays a key role in the transformation of power relations. When marginalised women, youth and men are empowered and capable of exercising their civil and political rights, they can challenge elite control over decision making, create positive incentives and thus influence power holders to engage in democratic decision making processes.

Irish Aid must continue to support civil society organisations (CSO) in partner countries, in particular indigenous CSOs who have a mandate and responsibility towards the people living in extreme poverty in their communities. The capacity and sustainability of local organisations must be strengthened so that they can deliver effective programmes and to ensure they are better equipped to mobilise their communities to hold the national government to account. Maintaining strong links with indigenous CSOs should also play a critical role in informing and refining Irish Aid's strategies in partner countries and beyond.

Irish Aid should take a bottom up (country-led) approach to developing strategies, programmes and plans, based on the needs and aspirations of low income countries and not on an agenda that is being driven outside of these contexts.

In parallel to supporting local CSOs, Irish Aid should contribute to the creation of a conducive institutional environment in partner countries. This includes supporting the establishment of strong legal frameworks, people-centred accountability mechanisms, power balance between state institutions, and proper oversight and transparency of the private sector.

6.3 Financing Aid

The ongoing economic crisis and the ensuing cuts to the aid budget in recent years underline the imperative of identifying new sources of financing for development so that we will meet and sustain our commitment to spending 0.7% of GNI on poverty eradication in the coming years.

There is increasing support across Europe for the introduction of a financial transactions tax. This tax would apply to speculative trade on financial products: stocks, bonds commodities and currency transactions and represents a tiny tax of 0.05% on banks' financial transactions. Introduced globally, it has the potential to raise hundreds of billions of pounds every year for fighting poverty. Ireland should support the introduction of innovative mechanisms, such as a Financial Transactions Tax, for fighting poverty domestically and internationally.

The Government commitment to increase ODA to the UN target of 0.7% of GNI must remain a cornerstone of Ireland's aid policy. It represents a strong and popular statement of Ireland's commitment to the UN's Millennium Development Goals and Ireland's role in the world. The White Paper should agree a roadmap for meeting the 0.7% ODA target of GNI by 2015 with specific targets and milestones.

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Irish Aid should take a bottom up (country-led) approach to developing strategies, programmes and plans based on the needs and aspirations of low income countries and not on an agenda that is being driven outside of these countries.

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