Introduction

This submission reflects my views that have developed during my time as an overseas aid worker, my PhD research on democracy and civil society in Africa, and my current research on governance and innovations in democratic theory. In preparation of the submission I have shared for discussion some or all of these views with the Development Studies Association of Ireland and the Irish African Partnership.

Question 1: Progress since the last White Paper

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

In some areas it is clear that Irish Aid has delivered on its commitments. For example, it has simplified funding mechanisms; established the Volunteer Center and was successful in establishing an inter-departmental Commitee on Development. Its commitment to maintaing and building support for the development cooperation programme among Irish citizens has also been achieved. In extending this assement to other areas however a notable limitation was the lack of publically available relevant data in disaggregated and usable formats.

Based on the information provided at either the primary level (Irish Aid) or secondary level (third-party evaluations) for the public I am therefore unable to assess whether the commitments were realistic or successfully implemented. In the section on *Ways of working* below I propose the adoption of Open Government standards for releasing the information required to make such decisions.

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Question 2: Changing Context

What are the implications of the changes in the global and domestic context for the Government's aid programme in the future?

The range of issues which are now affecting opportunities for development have changed significantly. These issues which are interrelated in a complex system include; the economic crisis; ecological and climate issues; the widespread use of ICT; changing expectations and patterns of governance; increased conflict; and in particular, an undermining of the legitimacy of institutions mandated with addressing these issues.

How will these affect current priorities?

A wide literature is emerging focused on the need for new governance and innovation systems that can build resilience and problem-solving capacity at the micro-level of society. Some of these levers for system change are already a focus area for Irish Aid. For example the issue of *gender* is seen as a systematic way of 1) increasing protection for women's rights and interests through the political system 2) having wider social and economic benefits. Other approaches include crowd sourced innovations and new governance mechanisms for enabling adaptive capacity to climate change (Munton, 2003).

Within this context and the necessary constraints imposed by reduced public funding I suggest that it is necessary for Irish Aid to place a renewed focus on such system approaches to problem solving. This system approach is most effective when done in partnerships and networks. This would require at a basic level horizontal re-orientation in the 'good governance' model and a 'systemic' focus on the role and activities of civil society. These system approaches are relevant across the range of challenges identified.

I specifically propose three approaches:

1. A governance approach that builds on new democratic theory with respect to bottom up deliberative approach. I outline this approach and explain its relevance in the context of conflict resolution

2. A new way of working that releases the benefits of open data, crowd-sourced collaboration and deliberation with Irish citizens, partners and the wider aid community. This has the added benefit of not only increasing the knowledge and idea generation capacity of citizens but also helps to build ownership of the program among the Irish public.

3. An analytical model for assessing aid priorities in which foundation frameworks have synergistic and exponential effects through target projects. One of such frameworks is higher education and the governance of diversity and social conflict.

I explain each of these approaches in this short document. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss or submit a more detailed document on any of these suggestions.

Question 3: 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 consensus is emerging that complex problems such as ecological degradation require knowledge systems that harness both diverse empirical and *experiential* knowledge from citizens as well as the capacity for augmenting decision making system capacity by harnessing networks. In this regard, I propose that Irish Aid can significantly benefit in a number of ways by adopting Open Data standards and Open Government Platforms.

3.1 Open Data

I propose that to improve this situation moving forward, in a way that has a positive effect on Irish citizen engagement and knowledge, is to adopt Open Data standards. These have recently been mandated in the Irish Government's eGovernment plan for 2012 – 2015.

I further propose that IrishAid provide explicit support for supporting the current move towards OpenGovernment in developing countries. A number of authors have pointed to the problem of the lack of information in developing countries for transparency and accountability (Devas and Grant, 2004).

3.2 Collaboration and Deliberation with citizens and partners

There is low public engagement in Ireland in the workings of Irish Aid. Rather than public information campaigns alone I propose more innovative approaches which include deliberative processes, Open Data and the implementation of an open discussion network on issues related to the work of Irish Aid.

Citizen deliberation processes should be included in Irish Aid as a way of engaging the public and of making improved policy. Processes for including marginal voices should be incorporated into Irish Aid so that its internal processes are democratic. Such deliberative processes should take place both on an operational and programmatic level.

3.3 Rooted in Open Collaboration and Research

I note the plan for developments in the internal research capacity of Irish Aid which is critical to improving its adaptive capacity into the future. However, given the complex challenges facing citizens on a global level an *integrated* knowledge generation and research framework is necessary.

In this respect I propose enhancing Irish Aid's internal knowledge with that generated through citizen deliberations and with the research and innovation

capacity of Irish Higher Education institutions. Both of these sources of knowledge are currently under utilized by Irish Aid. However, by making core data available (Open Data) in useable formats, Irish Aid can open opportunities for relevant 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.

In this respect I further propose support for research network activities that *demonstrate* innovative outputs as a result of collaboration on areas that are related to Irish Aid's strategy.

3.4   New knowledge use and management practices

With an increase in knowledge input it is required that Irish Aid establish improved knowledge management practices so that the information can be effectively used by Irish Aid and in deliberative processes. The 2009 OECD-DAC Peer Review of Irish Aid drew attention to the areas of learning, research and knowledge management.

> " 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).

3.7   New ways of working for Irish civil society organizations

I would like to propose an experiment in incentivizing the civil society fund towards improved collaboration, resource sharing and the elimination of redundancy between NGOs and civil society organizations. I suggest that it is worthwhile to pilot an instance of a collaborative rather than competitive funding model and deliberate on its effects with the NGO community and citizens.

3.6   Improved structure and content of White Paper

I would also suggest that future commitments be clearly stated and rooted in a coherent framework, the relationships between which are clearly explained.

Question 3: Key Issues

3. A.   How should the Government respond to the key issues of hunger, fragility, climate change, basic needs, governance and human rights, and gender equality? Are there other issues?

3.A.1 Evolve the 'good governance' 3-tier model

While good governance is widely accepted as being the foundation stone for the alleviation of poverty and the achievement of human rights, definitions of what good governance is or should be are unclear. The current model assumes that the representative system rooted in a three-sphere social model is the most effective framework. International instruments measure the extent to whether countries make progress towards its core indicators.

While such indicators relate to important features of democratic states such as free elections, a free press the freedom to associate among others, they are not substantively designed towards the active governance of diversity and social conflict. Elections for example only work on the premise that actors accept the rules of the game. Where this does not hold there can be a disproportionate result to violence as in the case of Kenya in 2007. As such it can be argued that electoral and representative based governance does not have inherent resilience built into its processes for the explicit acknowledgement and management of social conflict. On the one hand civil society organizations are situated in an antagonistic relationship with the state and overall in a competitive relationship with each other. On the other hand, there is little focus on the horizontal tensions and discourses[1] in every day social struggle that can 1) either ignite into social conflict over resources and power or 2) be constructively harnessed for inclusive governance. Indeed scholars and practitioners have been progressively challenging the current governance model as too normative and not rooted in organic politics. The new approaches that have emerged in the UK on *practical norms* (Sardan) and *good enough governance* for example highlight emerging adaptations of the model.

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[1] Discourses are defined as a way of thinking about the world that is informed by certain types of knowledge and beliefs on cause and effect. Discourses typically have set preferences on an issue under discussion. E.g. environmental discourse V conservative economic discourse

Innovations in deliberative democracy are beginning to demonstrate ways in which horizontal deliberative processes among citizens at the grassroots level can lead to resolution of conflict, high problem solving capacity and creativity. Empirical studies on the impact of deliberative processes are growing particularly in the area of climate governance. A number of European states are beginning to explore these possibilities including Ireland's Citizens Assembly.

While these experiments may seem unrelated to Irish Aid's program, I argue that they are highly significant for program design as well as re-thinking the normative democratic framework for engagement with states currently based on the 'good governance' paradigm.

Given the scope of this document I focus here on the programmatic level from which the implications for 'good governance' are clear.

Programmatic benefits of deliberative processes

1) Deliberative processes enable the uncovering of discourses on issues within a community. Discourse is regarded as central to the operation of power. The power of the development discourse as a unifying thought framework is one example. The prevailing discourse on gender is another and I suggest that there are an infinite number of culturally specific discourses on gender which are of central importance to development.

2) Deliberative approaches can enable the unlocking of knowledge in 'beneficiary' communities in ways that current methods cannot.

3) Deliberations do not have to reach consensus but agreement on the range of legitimate options for consideration (termed meta-consensus). It has been demonstrated that this provision has enabled productive communication across strongly opposing groups (Dryzek & Niemeyer, 2007).

As such the benefit of horizontal citizen deliberation processes as part of program design and implementation can lead to

- New information to inform Irish Aid's program
- Enable grassroots problem-solving

- A unifying framework that can create synergies across the Irish Aid program particularly between the areas of gender, conflict and fragile states, governance, human rights and climate.

This is because deliberative processes require inclusion across difference. Discourse difference is estimated using Q-methodology. This simply requires a diverse sample of members of a community to rank statements on an issue. Following analysis of the rankings, discourses are identified and are represented at deliberations. Currently participation methods do not use a discourse approach and hence deep-seated conflicts within a community can remain hidden with implications for both program suitability, effectiveness and sustainability.[2]

> This suggested approach differs from (though is complementary to) current participatory methods. It is proposed that Irish Aid support experiments in this area.

Such a governance approach can support the mainstreaming of peace building and conflict avoidance through programs. As such a discourse approach may have been effective in addressing the issues raised in the 2003-2006 Country Evaluation on Timor. Specifically it is noted:,

> [Irish Aid] did not demonstrate in any of its strategies a thorough understanding of the more fundamental causes of conflict. Thus one finds little mention of factors such as *weak political leadership, the complex multi-ethnic tensions within Timorese society*, the *problem of high unemployment* especially of youth, the weak security sector and the essentially short-term approaches pursued by the United Nations implementing agencies in addressing political and security problems' (emphasis added)

Indeed governance is an issue that is frequently repeated in evaluation reports. For example the OECD Evaluation of the Irish Aid (Uganda) Country Strategy Paper states "Insufficient attention was given to the risk of conflict". A notable feature of

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[2] While the potential impact of streamlining deliberative processes through civil society program activities are not yet known, it is possible that they could effect the political sphere, specifically the dynamics of the clientelist model from which ethnic block voting patterns and corruption ensue.

the HLF4 in the Busan report was the emphasis on Fragile States and Peace-building (Pararaph 26).

I thus propose that Irish Aid adopt deliberative approaches in its program response to these issues. On the one hand, engaging high quality deliberations before program design and secondly encouraging deliberative processes through project implementation.

By extension I further propose:

- A more open and less normatively stated approach to governance
- An explicit commitment to new understandings of and approaches to the governance of diversity (such as deliberative democracy) that have a direct impact on gender, conflict, climate and human rights, and therefore to hunger and basic needs.

Such approaches would enable new approaches to emerge for exploration with citizens and partner organizations and enhance Irish Aid's commitment to the values of equality, dignity and the right to choose one's government.

3.A.2. Emphasize innovation

In response to these challenging issues I propose that Irish Aid include a strong emphasis on innovation in its funding calls. Such a focus on innovation is already strong within Ireland's enterprise and employment sectors and hence there is both a strong culture and base of expertise from which to draw. An innovation focus can be particularly useful for maximizing a reduced budget.

3.A.4 Synergy framework

Proposal

I propose that Irish Aid adopt a synergy framework for assessing not only how maximum value can be achieved, but doing so in a way that can reduce the cost of implementation and improving the overall efficiency of the program. On the one hand, synergy frameworks can help identify overlapping effects and co-operative opportunities towards improved outputs. On the other hand, it can also be applied to identifying magnitudes of impact of a particular policy. For example, deliberative approaches as a cross-cutting *method* can have a high magnitude effect on gender equality because it releases information on gender discourses which can inform gender-related program design. Evaluations on the comparative effectiveness and cross-issue effect can be empirically estimated.

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

Rather than responding to which thematic areas should be prioritized, I propose that firstly, foundation approaches which have a systemic effect should be implemented with a view to maximising synergy across programs. These are governance and education, specifically

- Mainstreaming of deliberative processes both internally and through programs
- An emphasis on evolving the good governance paradigm as discussed above
- A focus on a flexible network approach to enabling higher education development.

The logic is that prioritizing these areas will have a synergistic knock-on effect on the thematic areas and can enable improved and more cost-effective outputs. I explain these below.

3.B.1   Evolve the 'good governance' paradigm

I have argued above that including horizontal deliberative processes in development programs can address issues related to conflict that are not currently addressed through the discourse of good governance and enable the release of valuable social

information. Such processes positively evolve the participatory bases of current aid delivery models. They are targeted to finding solutions across difference and lines of conflict and specifically require the inclusion of diverse perspectives. As such they can enable new thinking on the ´good governance´ paradigm because they make explicit the organic politics at play in ´ beneficiary´ states. It is not a significant mind shift to conceive that new citizen level 'deliberative' participation models can enhance the likelihood of socially just and equal political systems because they:

- Bring new information to support the improvement of policy design and planning.
- Could reduce the likelihood of social conflict in the long term. This assumption is based on empirical evidence of the conflict resolution potential of these methods particularly in relation to decisions on the allocation of resources.
- Can enable more context tailored governance approaches to emerge from citizens because of the open deliberative space, acknowledgement of difference and its meaning for governance. To illustrate, a notable example, the issue of circumcision is a salient political issue in the Kenyan presidential election and is directly related to issues of ethnicity. There are no current mechanisms by which this issue can be publicly negotiated yet it is a core element in the discourse of the *Mungiki*. Indeed as Diamond has noted civil society is a continuum of the civil to the uncivil, yet the spaces for addressing real and potentially uncivil issues does not exist. Deliberative spaces within civil society could allow this. The potential of new governance mechanisms from citizens would enhances the other aspects of climate, gender and human rights.

3.B.2 Emphasize higher education as an systemic way to address core issues

While governance issues deal directly with basic needs and hunger in an indirect way, higher education has a more direct impact on these isses. For this reason I include it as our second system issue. There are two approaches: supporting higher education capacity building in the South[3]; leveraging the

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[3] and North with respect to global issues.

capacity for new knowledge generation and innovation within this sector. As I have discussed the latter briefly in Question 3 above, I will now focus on the issue of HE capacity building.

HE capacity building

There is a clear consensus that African higher education institutes have been impacted by capacity erosion over the past three decades. Miyo (2008) states that African universities are currently facing a staffing crisis which will have a severe knock on effect in the coming decade on the availability of professionals to keep countries running. Furthermore, brain drain among university graduates in Sub-Saharan Africa is estimated at nearly one-third (Docquier and Marfouk, 2005).

In this context I argue that a deliberative governance approach together with strong HE support can provide a robust framework for *knowledge* and *communication* which are core drivers of economic growth and human development. This framework is in synergy with the social dynamics of communications technology spreading use which is increasing in developing countries (e.g. mobile telephony and internet access).

Proposal

I acknowledge however, that limited resources place constraints on the types of engagement Irish Aid can support in respect to Higher Education in the South. For this reason I propose an innovation focus in this sector that is focused on developing a collaborative networked approach across European and African organisations engaged in HE development. This approach would specifically aims towards:

Collaborative Networking

This approach can support:

- Leveraging expertise, reducing overlap and through collaboration developing new approaches in cost effective ways.

- Potentially enable access to the information in better resourced institutions (blackboard, lecture notes etc.) similar to the effect of the Open Access publication movement. Harvard, MIT and Stanford are already leading players in providing free lectures through the internet .

- Enable the roll-out of a mentoring program which levers the capacity of diaspora and international academics to provide professional support to PhD candidates and researchers in 'beneficiary' countries. Such a mentoring program is currently being piloted by the Irish African Partnership. I envisage the mentoring network as an unifying knowledge sharing and flexible platform that can connect and improve the effectiveness of the spectrum of partnerships with African universities.

The unique new offerings enabled by collaborative networking harmonises with the EU´s ongoing project to install high-speed connections to between African and European research institutes (e.g. SANReN high-speed network in South Africa). Recent reports have called for more focus on research networks for building knowledge societies (Adam, King and Hook 2010). A number of research networks are emerging with whom the Irish African Partnership are connected for example, EARIMA and SANPAD. Others include but are not limited to ABORNE - The African Borderlands Research Network and SADRN - Southern African Development Research Network.

Policy Coherence on Brain Drain
I also support continued work towards on the development of policy on the issue of Brain Drain where the staffing practices of Irish health and public institutions are coherent with Ireland's aid objectives.

Conclusion

In this document, I have set out proposals which can enable a new approach to Ireland's development co-operation program that is relevant to the significant political, ecological, economic and social changes that have occurred since the 2006 White Paper. I have highlighted the need for Open Data, deliberative

engagement with citizens, and the need to harness the capacity of the HE research community. I have also pointed to the need for a focus on levers for systemic change of which I have focused on two: new understandings of governance and; new types of engagement with higher education.

I acknowledge that such proposals are only part of a quality and comprehensive approach to the challenges facing Irish Aid in their mandate to co-ordinate Ireland's development co-operation program. Our aim has been to highlight system changes that can allow space for innovation to flourish and open communications between citizens to flow to the benefit of Irish Aid and its stakeholders. A cursory glance at Southern and Northern societies show that it is among citizens where rapid problem-solving and adaptation is now occurring as evident in the peer-to-peer production networks and the rise of social movements and social innovations.

I am very happy to have had the opportunity to provide this feedback. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss any aspect of this document in further detail.

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