

Submission for Review of White Paper on Irish Aid

by Viatores Christi Lay Missionary Group.

1. Viatores Christi is an Irish Lay Missionary Group founded in 1960 in Dublin. For over 50 years we have been recruiting, training, placing and supporting over 2,000 skilled Irish Missionary Development Workers in area of need in over 45 countries throughout the world.
2. We are members of the Irish Missionary Union and of Mísean Cara and the majority of our members are engaged in development projects and capacity building funded by Irish Aid through Mísean Cara and previously through APSO.
3. As members of the IMU and Mísean Cara we are party to the submission made by the IMU/Mísean Cara on the review of the White Paper and would like to fully endorse the points included in that submission, particularly in relation to key issues for the future of Irish Aid policy such as climate change, education and empowerment, income generation and trade, human rights advocacy, HIV/AIDS, debt forgiveness etc.
4. However on our own behalf we would like to emphasise point d) of the Recommendations for Ways of Working in the future section of the submission i.e.
'Instead of supporting large salaries for UN personnel, invest more in volunteers or Irish graduates in the field.'
5. We believe strongly in the significant and very cost effective contribution which Irish skilled personnel, be they missionaries or development workers, lay or religious, have made and can continue to make to the capacity building of communities and individuals in the developing world. It goes without saying that they go where there is a need, which cannot be met locally by skilled national workers and their aim is to empower people so that they can take control of their own future development.
6. Through living in the local community, experiencing and learning first hand about the local culture and problems, putting their time and skills at the service of the poor and marginalised, they contribute hugely to international relations by building bridges and making the world a more equal and just place for all.
7. Many of our members serve in development for many years but even those who volunteer for shorter periods of 2 to 5 years, continue their life of commitment when they return home and are a very valuable resource in the area of development education, human rights advocacy and influencing public opinion on the value of Irish Aid, fair trade, climate change etc. and the need for Irish people to continue our commitment to the poor and exploited in our world.
8. So we would ask that Irish Aid policy continue to support the work of Irish lay missionaries and other development personnel as a very worthwhile and cost effective development intervention and make special provision to enable this contribution to the building of a better, fairer world to continue and expand.

Viatores Christi

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