

Introduction

Progressio Ireland is an independent Irish international development organisation that is part of the Progressio family. Through our skill-sharing and development worker programme we work in partnership with local organisations in 11 countries to facilitate people's active participation in their own development. Contributing to structural policy change at a global level is fundamental to our work. Our key areas are participation/ effective governance and sustainable environment.

Progressio Ireland welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the review of the White Paper on Irish Aid. The paper represents Progressio Ireland's views on how Ireland can continue to work as a leader in the provision of high quality development aid and development cooperation. The response is based on a brief consultation with specific partners of Progressio Ireland overseas, Progressio's sister organisation in the UK and organisations with the international development sector in Ireland.

1. Progress Made

There is much evidence to suggest that the reputation of Irish Aid as a world leader in international aid is justified. The 2006 paper outlined a strong strategy based on poverty eradication, human rights and partnership with civil society. It also put into the spotlight the need for a more coherent approach to the implementation of policy across government departments. There has been strong external support and validation for the Irish Aid programme in general, and an acceptance of the relevance of the priorities contained within the Paper. Anecdotally, Progressio partners who have had direct contact with Irish Aid in the field have reported very positively on that engagement and the impact of the work on the ground.

There are many positive elements and outcomes in and as a result of the White Paper. Of note is the fact that the focus that Irish Aid has made on food security and nutrition has allowed the organisation to become a leader in this area. As a donor of a relatively small size, this kind of focussing down is to be welcomed. There is also good evidence to suggest that the approach to human rights by Irish Aid has been very sound. This could be more integrated into the overall framework of the programmes, however, which will come up later in this paper. The continued untied nature of aid is also to be lauded and needs to be maintained as a result of this review process.

Also positive has been the sustained and strategic engagement with civil society which can add a richness and reach to the work that otherwise might not be present.

However, there are areas in which are less positive. The reduction in Overseas Development Assistance by 30% since 2008 needs to be considered as problematic, even in this current economic climate. As problematic as the reduction is the actual lack of predictability that this has passed on to the partners of Irish Aid at all levels.

It is also clear that while the White Paper raises the issue of policy coherence there is, in fact, a great deal of evidence to suggest that the mechanisms put in place and the impacts on the ground have been fairly limited in this regard.

What has come to the forefront in recent meetings and conversation is that there are extremely positive elements to Irish Aid supported development education work. However, it is also clear that more needs to be done to link up local and global agendas, and to involve increasing numbers of people in a serious way in the long-term, international development debate.

2. Changing context

The current economic climate is much more challenging than at the time of the development of the White Paper in 2006. In general, politicians in developed nations are finding it hard to justify spending more on development aid when they are cutting spending in their home countries. The Irish public have been noted for being generally favourable towards aid. But during times of economic hardship they may need more convincing that the tax revenue used to fund development is money well spent. In all areas public expenditure will become more heavily scrutinised and examined and therefore Irish Aid needs to ensure that its aid programmes are relevant, effective, transparent and accountable. It also returns us to the point above about the way in which the Irish Aid programme is communicated within Ireland. This is important, as there are serious global challenges that need the support of development aid.

There has been a shifting demographic with respect to poverty around the world, with increasing numbers of poor and marginalised living in what are now classed as middle-income countries. While it remains relevant to work in the poorest countries where progress towards the MDGs has been slowest, this changing context should call donors to ensure that they are targeting their assistance appropriately. And the strong spotlight it puts on inequality in development should push donors to adopt a truly rights-based approach to their development work.

The emergence of the BRICS as major new actors in the aid donor arena is important. The review should consider what role Ireland might play in cooperating with and challenging these new donors in order to contribute to the building of a global aid framework that builds on past successes and that can be as effective as possible.

Finally, the current context is pushing the non-governmental development sector to look at the ways they are working, and seek more innovative and sustainable approaches to their work. This is to be welcomed.

3. Key Issues

The issues of hunger, fragility, climate change, basic needs, governance & human rights, and gender equality mentioned in the White Paper have given

Ireland's aid programme a useful focus and these should be retained. In this submission, we look at areas that would help strengthen the gains in these focus areas. In particular, we look at the issues of water; a rights based approach; policy coherence; trade and development and weapons and fragile states.

i) Water

A higher spend by Irish Aid on water and sanitation would be a positive step to improving achievements in the different Irish Aid priority areas.

Water is a cornerstone of development. It is essential to life, and without it people find it impossible to live and work. Yet, though water is essential, for millions of people in the developing world, access to adequate water and sanitation facilities is an ongoing challenge that requires a great deal of their resources, and carries financial, physical and time burdens.

The importance of access to clean water and sanitation was recognised with the Millennium Development Goals. The target 7c was to "halve, by 2015, the proportion of the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation". As an indicator for this measure, the MDG goals chose to use access to an improved water supply and an improved toilet as a proxy for access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation.

On March 6th 2012, the World Health Organisation (WHO) and UNICEF joint monitoring programme for water supply and sanitation (JMP) announced that the water portion of this target had been met. Since 1990 more than 2 billion people have gained access to an improved water source. This is a wonderful achievement, and ensures that many people across the world will have a better quality of life. However, in spite of this achievement, there is still a lot to do. Firstly, while the water target has been met, the aim of this was only to half the number of people without access to an improved water source. This has been achieved, but that still leaves 780 million people without access to an improved water source. Secondly, access to an improved water source is a poor measure for access to clean safe water.

The mere existence of an improved water source does not mean that clean water is accessible. Improved water sources have to be maintained, if this does not happen, the water will quickly become contaminated and will, in the end, be as safe as an unimproved water source. Also, by using the measure of whether an improved water source is available, this does not consider ease of access or cost of access. The measure considers that a person has access if they live no more than one kilometre from an improved water source. But one kilometre is a significant distance to have to travel for something as essential as water, especially when one considers that when this water source is reached, the water must then be carried back. Also, by only focusing on whether an improved source is available within one kilometre, the measure does not consider the costs of this source and whether this cost is affordable for a family. Even if a household is within one

kilometre of an improved water source, if they cannot afford to pay for it, they do not have real access.

We feel that increasing the amount of Irish Aid money available for water and sanitation would contribute in a cross-cutting way to the Irish Aid priorities as outlined below.

Water and Irish Aid priorities

Hunger

Water is a key element in combating hunger. 70% of all water used is for agricultural needs. It has been recently noted in many studies the crucial role that subsistence farmers play in ensuring food security for local populations. Water needs for subsistence farmers are likely to be brought into sharp focus as climate change affects weather patterns. The need for irrigation will become increasingly pertinent.

Malnutrition is strongly associated with a lack of clean water. This is not just because difficulty accessing water makes subsistence farming more difficult, meaning that children don't get adequate nutrition. Repeated bouts of diarrhoea or infections caused by lack of access to clean water or adequate sanitation or hygiene leaves children malnourished. Children who are underweight and malnourished are also more vulnerable to all infectious illness and less likely to recover from them. This malnutrition causes approximately 70,000 deaths of children under five every year. The World Health Organisation estimated in 2008 that more than 2.2 million deaths of children per year could be prevented by reducing the diarrhoeal and malnutrition affects caused by unsafe water, inadequate sanitation or insufficient hygiene

Increasing water provision for subsistence farming (and supporting the good management of that water provision) will have a direct impact on hunger and have a wider ripple effect as any small profits have the potential to be invested in health and education.

Climate Change

This is strongly linked to the first point on hunger. As climate change continues to alter weather patterns, so water will become an increasingly important issue for farmers throughout the world, and in particular in poorer regions where subsistence agriculture is at the core of production.

There is also an issue in low lying coastal regions that the overuse of the water table leads it to be contaminated with salt water, rendering it useless. This is causing water to become a non-renewable resource. Irreversible effects on the water system will in turn contribute to climate change.

Basic needs

Water is fundamental to the meeting of basic needs.

Lack of access to clean water and sanitation is a major contributor to poor health and plays a large role in the health burden. The WHO estimates that 10% of the disease burden worldwide could be prevented by improving drinking water, sanitation, hygiene related to water and water resource management. This would significantly improve the lives of people globally, but particularly in the world's poorest regions, where the effects are felt most and it would also prevent thousands of deaths each year.

Access to clean drinking water and sanitation services are important not just because of the direct effects on health of poor quality water, but also because it is important for fighting and preventing illnesses not directly related to access to water. For instance, people recovering from malaria need clean water and adequate sanitation to build up their strength, while antiretroviral medications used to treat HIV/Aids should be used with clean water to be most effective.

Many children miss out on education because they are needed to carry out the vital work of collecting the family's water, or dealing with the outcomes of access to poor water. It also impacts very directly on the education of girls and adolescent girls, as lack of good water and sanitation facilities in schools cause girls to drop out when they reach puberty.

Water can also have an economic burden. Improved water sources cost money to set up and run, and this cost is usually borne by the users. This cost can be a significant part of a families expenditure, and, because water is essential to life, they either have to bear the cost, or use unsafe sources of water, such as open wells. Using significant portions of their income for water mean that a family cannot save for unexpected expenditure, such as medicine to fight an illness, and leaves them vulnerable to slipping further into poverty or unable to invest in income generating activities that would life them out of it.

Governance and Human Rights

Here we start with the view that water itself is a right. However, water (or lack of access to water) is closely connect to the fulfilment of other human rights including food and health. There is also strong evidence that when people have to spend a lot of time struggling to fulfil their basic needs, there is less time to work as a community for human rights and good governance.

While working on water will not guarantee human rights, it helps contribute to the fulfil of other human rights, and frees up time, energy and health for communities to organise to advocate for the fulfilment of their rights by the state.

Gender equity

As has been frequently noted, across most of the world, women are the managers and collectors of water for their households. Where water is a scarce commodity, this can be a hefty burden and can take up much of the time of women and girls within a household. The UN found that the average time a woman in sub-Saharan Africa spend collecting water was 34 minutes per trip. For woman in rural areas, it was 36 minutes. This is for one trip; but many times women will have to make more than one trip per day to collect sufficient water for there family. This adds up to a significant time burden on women, which reduces there ability to complete other tasks, such as income generating activities, or community work.

The implication of this is that without relatively easy access to safe, easily accessible water, gender equity is unlikely to be attained. This is also related to the issue of hunger, as it is women producers who make up the majority of subsistence farmers in Africa and lack of water for agricultural production can also be a strong gender issue. As climate change impacts on water resources across key areas in Africa and the world, the need to put water up the agenda as a cross cutting issue becomes ever more important.

Fragility

It has been clearly documented that water will become a major source of conflict in the world. This can contribute to the fragility of a state by exacerbating already present tensions between different groups and stakeholders. In post conflict or post humanitarian disaster situations, recovery is hampered by lack of access to clean water.

ii) Rights-based approach

Irish Aid should move from including human rights as a priority area, to looking at developing a coherent rights based approach to their programming.

Irish Aid has made a strong statement of intent by including Human Rights as a priority area. However, achievement of the MDGs and key international agreements that have been signed by Ireland rests on an overall rights-based approach. This is also essential within the global context of the greatest number of poor and marginalised living in very unequal societies within middle income countries.

This requires a clearer framework related to all Irish Aid programme areas. Programmes need to be clear as to how their programmes will impact on poor and vulnerable groups both directly and indirectly. In addition they need to show how their programmes will contribute to the long-term and sustainable improvement of the lives of the poor and marginalised through advocating and facilitation the formation of pro-poor policy frameworks and through the

participation at a global level for changes in multi-lateral and global frameworks that have the tendency to keep people poor.

This is not necessarily an easy task, as there is strong debate on what actually constitutes a good rights based approach. However, Irish Aid should be transparent about what constitutes for them the rights based approach, and then seek to implement that approach across the programmes.

iii) Policy Coherence

Policy coherence should be pushed up the agenda for Irish Aid, with Irish Aid playing a facilitating role across government.

Irish Aid has delivered a high quality aid programme, but lack of policy coherence across government means that the impact of the aid programme will tend to be undermined by other government actions.

Policy coherence was clearly outlined as an area for action in the 2006 White Paper. However, it would appear that the mechanisms that have been set up have not had a substantial impact.

There are many examples where policy in one area might undermine the gains from development assistance. One such key area is the issue of capital seepage from developing countries. It has been noted in several recent publications that the actual outflow of resources from developing countries through capital flight, tax evasion and avoidance far outstrips the aid monies actually going in.

Climate change is another area of great importance. In many countries the impact of climate change is likely to more than negate any of the gains from ODA. Irish Aid therefore, needs to advocate for a justice approach to climate action across the government as a key strand in a coherent approach to long-term development.

We recognise that policy coherence is a very complex issue. It therefore requires that it be put at the centre of the White Paper as a key strand that will be developed over the coming years.

We support the Dochas proposal that one potential mechanism would be the production of a bi-annual report on government policies that are not coherent with development goals.

iv) Trade and Development

Irish Aid should develop a pro-poor trade strategy as an essential contribution to the long-term development of partner countries.

Progressio recognises the strong role that trade plays in lifting countries out of poverty. However, for this to happen in an appropriate fashion, pro-poor trade policies need to be developed. This is not just about support for fair or ethical

trade, but is really about the development of coherent multilateral, bilateral and national trade rules that are compatible with long-term development.

The linking of trade and development within the same Ministry in Ireland creates the potential for Ireland to be an advocate on this issue. As a relatively small player it would have to pick appropriate targets amongst the developed nations, the EU, the World Bank and the WTO to push for the space and time to be given to developing countries to create an appropriate trade strategy for them.

Clearly, this would start with Ireland ensuring that it has the appropriate strategies in place in terms of its approach to trade with developing countries. The Africa strategy was an interesting attempt to look at how that relationship might look in the future. We would urge, however, a re-looking at that strategy, as it does not fully reflect the development needs of the African counterparts that it is claiming partnership with.

iv) Weapons and fragile states.

Working in development in fragile states requires donors to become more aware of and involved in the issues around proliferation of weapons.

Weapons proliferation undermines security and development and reduces the success of development programmes. The high cost of rectifying conflicts and the damage they cause diverts valuable development aid resources from health, education and economic growth. Somalia, for example, is a state that suffers from extensive weapons proliferation, and remains a fragile developing state, engulfed in civil war, despite countless millions of dollars of development aid. The International Committee of the Red Cross estimates that in Mogadishu, the capital city of Somalia, there is a population of just 1.3 million people, but over 1 million guns in circulation, and an AK47 assault rifle can be easily purchased for as little as \$6 or even traded for grain. Although weapons may not directly cause violence, their mere presence is a source of insecurity among millions of people, and their low cost and availability can escalate conflicts, intensify violence, impede economic and social development and hinder the development of good governance and democracy, thus posing a major threat to development efforts. Weapons should be of concern to the development sector, rather than just a security consideration.

Irish Aid should consider the issue of arms/weapons in relation to its approach to governance. In order that this not become something new for Irish Aid to take up, it might at this stage be the increasing of awareness throughout Irish Aid about the impacts and possible approaches to arms proliferation and development.

4. Ways of Working

a) Irish Aid should develop an overall right-based framework to its programmes and should seek to develop a coherent approach across government as outlined above.

The current economic climate is difficult. But Ireland should not use the crisis as an excuse to renege on the 0.7% commitment. Ireland is rightly proud of its overseas development programme, and the reaching of that commitment would indicate the serious approach taken by Ireland to the Millennium Development Goals, the alleviating of poverty and the protection of human rights.

As important as the level of ODA is the predictability of that aid. Important developmental gains can quickly be lost if funding is lost part-way through a process.

b) In order to cement the 0.7 commitment and to aid predictability, the White Paper should seek to develop a multi-year framework for overseas development assistance that shows how Ireland will reach the 0.7% target by 2015.

Ireland's aid program has been highly praised by the OECD as one of the most effective aid programmes in the world. The Irish public should be aware of this, in order to foster continued support for our aid programme. Development education is extremely important, both in schools and within the general public, because without knowledge of the essential need for development aid, public support can easily deteriorate. There must be renewed and continual emphasis on public awareness and education. This is mentioned in the White Paper, but opportunities for public engagement outside of schools are poor.

How this communication is done is of extreme importance. Throughout Ireland, the desire to raise increasing amounts of funds has impacted on the way in which the work in developing countries is framed. The messages and images, in grand part continue to propagate negative messages with respect to the passive nature of the recipients of aid. Clearly, we are all aware that in fact the people and partners we all work with are not passive victims, but active participants in their own development processes, working incredibly hard to have some amazing impacts in their local, regional or national realities.

Clearly the sector is diverse, and it would not be advisable for Irish Aid to "decide" on communications for the sector. However, we would propose that:

c) Irish Aid, together with the non governmental sector (represented in the first instance by Dochas) should look at facilitating a process

whereby “best practice” can be established in terms of communicating development.

d) In addition, there should be a great emphasis in communicating the work of Irish Aid, and a strong communication strategy linked to the development of the post millennium development goals .

There are new rising economies that are becoming more active as donors, namely the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa). This raises important issues for the future of international development cooperation. These countries have previously been recipients of development aid themselves and have experience dealing with development issues. They are needed today to address global sustainable development, and without their input and cooperation, solutions to some issues will be very difficult to achieve, such as in the case of tackling climate change. There is also an increased recognition of the power of private actors and non-state actors, and the importance of including these actors in sustainable development efforts. The emergence of alternative approaches to development assistance might provide certain challenges, but forging smart and strategic partnership is one way for the international development community to better respond to today's growing development concerns.

e) Irish Aid should look at how best it can engage with the new and potential powerful actors in international development and should develop key strategies around its involvement with the BRICs. It should also developed a strategy around business and development.

There as been much discussion surrounding the development of new Sustainable Development Goals, to replace the Millennium Development Goals when they expire in 2015. Ireland has shown support for this concept, and we have a lot to contribute to the development of these new goals. Irish Aid, its partners and its associated research agencies should use their wide knowledge and expertise so that together we can actively contribute to the formation and implementation of these new SDGs, as well as developing new target achievement indicators. We must also stimulate the debate around the adoption of more holistic indicators to development rather than GDP. Ireland, as a leading provider of aid, has a lot to add to these discussions.

f) Irish Aid should be a key protagonist in the development of the post Millennium Development Goals. This could also be a potentially strong area for communications by Irish Aid to draw the public into the long-term development debate.

