



By Colman Farrell, CEO

Hello and thank you for the opportunity to submit to the White Paper Review Process. These are some brief suggestions and reflections based on my own experiences overall and my work with Suas. Please see below for three brief points and suggestions under the headings of:

- A) Innovation – Making a thematic area
- B) Education - Making the Case for Ireland to take a lead in Promoting 21st Century Learning
- C) Volunteering – Two main roles and making a case for meeting Human Resource needs.

Thank You,
Colman

A) INNOVATION:

The primary request is that of supporting innovation - at all levels, from micro to meso inc business models and new approaches.

As we collectively work through an era of substantive global change (IT, environment, post financial crisis, economic ascendance of 'developing countries', aging Western population) there is a need to support new and innovative approaches and then to expand or end funding depending on levels of success).

As Western based NGOs are likely to face 'competition' from emerging NGOs from developing countries (e.g. BRAC – founded in Bangladesh, now the largest non-religious private provider of education in the world) which operate on lower cost base, Western NGOs need to 'move up the value chain'. One way forward is by supporting innovation (itself a high value add task if done effectively) and also by becoming more innovative.

Yet innovation is effectively penalised within the sector. The increasing emphasis on clear and definite results with closely tied funding - in many ways restrict support for new ideas esp at early exploratory stages when outcomes may not be clearly predictable. In addition, supporting innovation inherently requires acceptance of more 'failure'. The public is understandably reluctant to fund something which might not work. And business - which is more open to this - has little understanding of the complexities of working in a development setting. A related challenge is that it is nearly impossible to secure the second stage core funding needed to enable organisations move from a pilot stage to scale. (The book Forces for Good - reviewing the most effective NGOs in the USA did not find a single example of an organisation moving from Good to Great without second stage core funding)

And innovation has a huge potential multiplier effect – effective business models or approaches can be replicated around the world far beyond the influence of any single NGO. E.g. Concern's investment in developing specialised low-cost foods for use in famine relief has changed practice within the sector globally.

Request: 5-10 % of funding is allocated for innovation and expansion of proven models/ approaches. This should be administered separately with an assessment board consisting of representatives from Irish Aid, NGOs as well as some people with an investment background. There should be explicit failure targets (prob 50%) and the messaging around this needs to be developed.

Innovation could also be introduced as a thematic area (either cross-cutting and/or standalone)



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B) EDUCATION: MAKING THE CASE FOR EDUCATION

Education is a critical and complex component of development and all social, economic and cultural development. As with Hunger, Education also plays into Ireland's history and culture. Irish Missionaries played an historic role in introducing the current model of education to many developing countries. Yet, it is a lower priority within the current development agenda in Ireland. Suas would like to raise the question as to how the overall priorities for the next White Paper will be established? And what will the process be for deciding priorities and also comparing one valid need with another?

The Opportunity for Ireland to Lead on 21st Century Learning.

The current model of Education around the world was largely developed in the 1850s in Victorian Britain as an innovative response to the challenges of the Industrial Revolution. That model was then exported throughout the British Empire and adopted across much of the world. Today, Education is undergoing a second (quiet) global revolution. As the world faces more ever complex challenges there is a growing realization that the current exam-centric approach is not producing the creators, innovators, citizens and leaders needed to create a better world.

A new approach is emerging – called 21st Century Learning, this entails a wide variety of new approaches which emphasise the development of communications skills, critical thinking, teamwork and personal effectiveness and leadership. Over the past few years the rate of innovation within Education has been increasing with new pedagogies (e.g. Jump Math), approaches to teacher training (TESSA), funding models (e.g schools running farms in Brazil), business models (low-cost private schools) and opportunities provided by IT & mobile technologies. The results of many of these have been substantively ahead of current approaches and some are beginning to scale (see http://jumpmath1.org/jump_research for an example)

As Education works through this paradigm shift - there is an opportunity for Education Systems in Developing Countries to leapfrog to 21st Century Learning approaches - just as they have in many cases skipped the landline stage of telecoms development to mobile phones.

Qatar (www.wise-qatar.org) is currently taking a leadership role globally in promoting innovation in Education – but no country with a significant history of development is yet doing so. There are some quality initiatives in Ireland (e.g. NCCA 40 School Pilot, Bridge 21 Programme) and if Ireland took the lead here – it would also help reposition Ireland as a country with a world class education system.

Request : That a % of ODA is allocated towards 21st Century Learning Initiatives and that there is an opportunity to present the Minister with a Business Case for Ireland to take a lead role in this area.



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C) VOLUNTEERING:

We will submit ideas on this through the Comhlamh-led paper. However, as there appears to be a general lack of clarity wrt this area I will include two main thoughts:

There seem to be two broad goals for volunteering:

- i. Building public engagement & understanding - not just of development - but of developing countries & their peoples.

- ii. Supporting development through placement of experienced professionals for long / short-term. (In both my and Suas' experience - recruiting the talent required to develop an organisation and increase impact is extremely difficult in an Irish context let alone overseas. The difficulty in securing a high performing senior management team is the primary constraint for all four Partner organisations with whom we work. This is for reasons of cost, availability as well as cultural acceptance - it is seen as a step backwards for many aspiring professionals from the local country to work in an NGO esp a local one. Irish Aid appear to have concerns about volunteering in this area - which I think we would all share - however this is not actually about volunteering - but Human Resource Management (which should be a key part of Capacity Building).

Request : That Volunteering is recognised and funded as a valid component of overseas development (under both the above categories) with an appropriate % expenditure of ODA.