



SUBMISSION ON THE REVIEW OF THE WHITE PAPER DUNDALK INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

INTRODUCTION:

The White Paper on Irish Aid (2006) was the first time that the Irish Government formally set out why it engages in development cooperation, how it does this, what areas and issues it sees as being central to its aid programmes. The paper is part of the Government's part of Ireland's foreign policy, five years later, a new Irish Government in a very different economic, social and political context, has decided to undertake a review of the current White Paper.

Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT) promotes development through a number of its academic programmes. Modules are available in Equality & Development Studies in the Sustainable Agriculture and Health promotion (degree) programmes. DkIT is also leading the PSC (Programme for Strategic Co-operation) funded project Water Is Life: *Amazzi Bulamu* (2008-2013). The Global Border Studies (GBS) was founded in 2010 as a collaborative pilot between World Education Thailand, Karen Refugee Committee Education Entity (KRC-EE) and Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT) to explore the feasibility of tertiary level online learning in a refugee camp setting. Solas (Students Overseas Live Aid Support) was established in 2005 following visits to Africa in 2004 and early 2005 by DkIT Nursing Students. DkIT has also set up a Volunteer Society (DkIT VS) which seeks to promote and enhance partnerships between the Institute and the developing world (sub-Saharan Africa) and to educate both staff and students both personally and professionally (volunteers will travel to Tanzania in July 2012).

Dundalk Institute of Technology welcome this review.

PROGRESS MADE:

Irish Aid's Overseas Development Assistance programme has been favourably supported by the Irish Public for the past 40 years. This support has continued despite the current challenging economic times. Never more than ever, the aid programme must deliver value for money and clear accountability to the Irish public and to the partners and communities where Irish Aid are working in developing countries. It must make a meaningful difference 'on the ground' to those most vulnerable communities.

Irish Aid has made significant progress on many of its commitments and strategies as outlined in the White Paper. Despite a number of cutbacks, in 2012 the Government has already pledged to provide €639 million to assist developing countries, in line with the 0.7 percent of GNP set by the UN target for Official Development Assistance.

The White paper stated that it would commit to deepening the level of engagement through the development of a programme for more strategic engagement between Irish Aid and higher education and research institutes in Ireland. In its first four years of existence (since 2007), the Programme for Strategic Cooperation has played an important role in promoting development research in the Irish HEI sector. Development partnerships between researchers and practitioners in Ireland have strengthened

in recent years with the establishment - for example of the Institute of Global Health (RCSI, DCU & NUIM), the Irish Forum for Global Health and the Development Studies Association of Ireland.

The Higher Education sector has been recognised universally as an important source of highly skilled professionals in many disciplines who can contribute in a very meaningful way to the development arena. Irish Aid should build on this growing demand for research and engage more deeply with the sector. However, the recently published Africa Strategy document (Sept 2011) developed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade only referred to research once throughout the document '*... shall examine options for further initiatives and activities in the areas of academic and research collaboration between Irish and African counterparts, including with private sector involvement*' (page 23) and failed to mention the opportunities that the sector can provide to contribute to Irish Aid's overall objective of poverty reduction.

The White Paper on Irish Aid states that the government is committed to working towards a coherent approach to development assistance across all government departments. There needs to be more balance between support to poverty reduction strategies and civil society strategies (e.g. climate change).

CHANGING CONTEXT:

At the Busan High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (November 2011) one of the shared principles which was agreed on was: Partnerships for development can only succeed if they are led by Developing countries and these partnerships should be open and mutually transparent. Irish Aid should continue to work towards a more Southern-led approach in their research programmes. More thought also needs to be given to defining the exact parameters of a Southern led approach i.e. clarification on what it should actually mean.

Irish Aid should ensure that their policies and priorities are more aligned with the country specific policies and strategies of the partner countries in the developing world in which they are working. Further, perhaps a clear distinction should be drawn between urban and rural issues and approaches adopted.

There is also a need for the establishment of hubs of expertise such as networks to include members from Global North and Global South to work on some of the priority areas such as climate change, hunger, water, gender equality. These networks should be cross-institutional and multi-disciplinary in nature. Irish Aid should encourage and support the establishment of such networks.

KEY ISSUES:

It has been recognised that there is a growing demand for research to tackle some of the issues emerging in the development world arena. In order for research to be effective in contributing to poverty reduction it needs to translate into policy and practice. Research will only inform policy if it is credible (evidence-based), provides practical solutions and is focused on problem-solving.

In light of the global recession and ensuring more value for money, Irish Aid needs to target research which will make a difference in addressing global poverty and inequality.

In relation to the IT infrastructure which exists in Africa, investment or technical assistance programme would be necessary to make future programmes work more effectively and cheaply, particularly in rural areas.

We welcome Irish Aid's more results-based approach in their programmes with HEIs, Civil Society organisations etc. Irish Aid should continue building research capacity in Southern Institutes. In terms of

measuring impacts of research capacity building, Irish Aid should be cognisant that this is a long-term view and will not be quantifiable in the short term.

We look forward to Irish Aid's research strategy which is in progress at the moment to provide clearer roadmap from Irish Aid to Irish HEIs as to how they expect to engage with and benefit from the Higher Education Sector in terms of research.

WAYS OF WORKING:

Irish Aid should continue supporting research capacity building in Africa through a number of channels including PhD programmes (models of joint supervision e.g. Water Is Life model), work-based learning for practitioners in partner countries. E-learning should also be a feature of future programmes.

Irish Aid to be informed by a consultative process should encourage a greater level of engagement with all stakeholders at all levels, including academia, community, and civil society and should involve both top-down and a bottom-up approaches. Levels of engagement need to be extended so that an integrated network on the Southern side is created.

Irish Aid should develop better means for the communication of development activities including research findings in the academic and public arena. Public dissemination of Ireland's Aid effort needs to get the message across to the Irish public that a large portion of the Aid budget has benefits in Ireland as well as in the recipient nation. The notion that our money disappears down a hole seems to be rife. The capacity building that many programmes encourage provides immense benefits on our side also to our own research. Publicity material needs to reinforce this message to the taxpayer.

Irish Aid's Performance Measurement Framework (which provides a metric for tracking results) should be broad enough to ensure impacts in relation to education and research capacity building in particular can be measured in a longer time scale.

The 2009 OECD-DAC Peer Review stated that: "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." (page 51). Irish Aid should establish improved knowledge management practices.

Contact details:

Dundalk Institute of Technology

Dr. Suzanne Linnane

Ms. Arleen Folan (arleen.folan@dit.ie)

