

Society of St Vincent de Paul

**Response to the Review of the White Paper
on Irish Aid**

Social Justice and Policy Team

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Society of St Vincent de Paul

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1. Introduction

At the recent White Paper consultation held in Dublin, Minister Joe Costello TD, responsible for the Irish Aid programme, encouraged all relevant organisations and individuals to make written submissions on the Programme. Similar to our sister organisation Dóchas, we interpret this call as an implicit support by the Minister of the Government commitment to reach 0.7% of spending on aid by 2015. We understand that Dóchas members recently made their submission on the Irish Aid White Paper, representing the common position of 43 Irish-based development NGOs. SVP is a supportive ally of Dóchas and a member of the ActNow 2015 campaign. As such we agree with the policy approach presented by them in this consultation.

2. The Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SVP) and Twinning

SVP is the largest charity of social concern and action in Ireland, with a variety of services for individuals, families and children being provided by over 10,000 voluntary members and 600 staff across the country. Home visitation is the main work of the organisation where we provide support, financial assistance and social connection to individuals and families in need. In addition, we are involved in an ongoing international process known as 'twinning'. Our thirteen Irish regions are twinned with and support activities of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul operating in the following Sub-Saharan African countries: Ghana, Nigeria, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Sierra Leone, Kenya, Gambia, Zambia, Tanzania, Botswana and Cameroon. Projects we assist include microfinance, schools, administration and a water project. Most projects are relatively small and funded in stages, aimed at building the capacity and effectiveness of the SVP in the above countries.

3. Key Policy Considerations for the Review of the White Paper on Irish Aid

We are responding to the Review of the White Paper in terms of three areas: Accountability and transparency; poverty and human rights considerations; and the need for sustained public engagement:

- Accountability and transparency is a central component of Irish Aid's work and of Ireland's policies affecting development. The review should include the provision of a clearer focus on enhanced outcomes for people and communities living in poverty and as such requires a whole-of-Government effort with coherence across aid, trade and other international policies.
- The review should serve to underpin strengthen the focus on poverty of Irish Aid. It needs to establish clear criteria in order to decide both the spatial and thematic areas and the ways of working that can have most positive impact. The review should have regard to a human rights-based approach, aligning the agency and its work most closely with Ireland's human rights obligations.
- We agree with Dóchas in terms of the requirement to ensure that continued public support for effective development is sustained and we recognise that this is one of the greatest challenges facing the programme being operated by Irish Aid. The agency needs to continue to encourage the Irish public to own and honour both our collective civil duties and our rights as global citizens and also to support and enhance stronger engagement in tackling the root causes of poverty and inequality.

4. Conclusions

As an international charity working to relieve poverty in 142 countries, we recognise the support and partnership of Western Governments in assisting development through appropriate aid and fairer trade as essential. Ireland's role as a relatively wealthy, non-colonial state means that it is very well placed to provide well designed and resourced overseas development assistance to some of the world's poorest countries. The Government needs to honour its commitment to reach 0.7% of spending on aid by 2015, founded on a review which follows the key policy considerations set out above.