

Irish Aid White Paper Review

Response from the Trinity International Development Initiative

A. Cover Page

Nature of views (indicate personal / on behalf of an organisation):

This response is submitted by

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On behalf of the Trinity International Development Initiative at Trinity College Dublin

B. Response:

Introduction: If respondents wish to include an introduction, setting out any background information to their organisation / activities undertaken to prepare their response / other relevant information, this should be kept as brief as possible

Key Messages:

- Research and a strong evidence base are fundamental to sound development aid policy and practice.
- Education is at the heart of building capacity in Southern partner institutions and nations. It underlies approaches to deal with all specific priority issues including hunger, climate change etc.
- Researchers and the HEI community in Ireland have a strong voice and an important role to play in supporting Irish Aid's development programme to combat poverty.
- Irish Aid should continue to support collaboration to strengthen higher education, both between Irish HEIs and partnerships between Irish HEIs and HEIs in partner countries. The resulting networks of expertise can then be fully leveraged to support Irish Aid policy and practice.
- Ireland should continue to ensure all aid is untied, as a priority.
- Irish Aid should prioritise partner countries where political rights and civil liberties are respected.

The Trinity International Development Initiative (TIDI) was established in 2007 by researchers, working on international development issues, from across Trinity College Dublin's (TCD) three faculties. The purpose of the TIDI is to maximise TCD's contribution to understanding and addressing the major global development challenges of our time through research, teaching and outreach activities.

TIDI's objectives are to:

1. Promote and raise the profile of TCD's research in international development
2. Enhance the quality and quantity of research on international development across a wide range of disciplines
3. Increase the number and enthusiasm of students at all levels and from both (the global) North and South, learning and undertaking research on international development
4. Undertake outreach activities to promote the above and to:
 - a. Deepen and increase the number of teaching and research partnerships with universities and other institutions in low- and middle-income countries.
 - b. Increase understanding by the public, government and other stakeholders of the issues and the existing state of knowledge.
5. Firmly establish TIDI as a valued and sustainable resource for all those working on, or interested in, international development at TCD, and a point of engagement for external stakeholders

TIDI undertook a process to compile this collective submission which involved publicising the review process and opportunities for TCD researchers to contribute individually or collectively, targeting researchers for comment and compiling all comments that were notified to the initiative.

Progress Made: Has the Government been successful in implementing the commitments contained in the White Paper on Irish Aid?

See comments in tables 1 and 2 below.

Changing context: What are the implications of the changes in the global and domestic context for the Government's aid programme in the future and how will these affect current priorities?

In the current economic climate, the government is coming under increasing and justified pressure to ensure accountable and cost-effective expenditure of taxpayers' money. Principles of aid effectiveness suggest that collaboration between the range of actors involved in international development must be encouraged to avoid duplication and ensure value for money. Initiatives that bring together disparate voices both within and between HEIs are valuable in this context. In addition, interventions must be underpinned by a strong rationale and evidence base in order to understand what works and what does not. Research is fundamental to this process. There is a wealth of knowledge in Irish HEIs on many of Irish Aid's priorities and global priorities too. This can be harnessed through the support of existing initiatives that have been energised through the PSC and through the direct funding of research. The development of a Research Strategy for Irish Aid can be a key enabler. It will be important to incorporate a process of transparent consultation around this strategy to ensure that it will harness the contribution that Irish academics have to make through their research.

Key Issues:

- **How should the Government respond to the key issues of hunger, fragility, climate change, basic needs, governance & human rights, and gender equality?**
- **Are there other issues?**
- **Given the limited resources and the need to focus these, which issues should the Government prioritise in its future aid programming?**

Irish Aid has set itself an ambitious agenda in the range of issues it seeks to address. At the heart of addressing these is education and capacity building of systems in partner countries. Education is the overarching theme that integrates and underlies work being done across all identified issues, for

example, hunger, climate change etc. Education should be supported at all levels from primary to higher education. Strengthening education systems is fundamental to the development of local capacity to govern, lead and to specialise and develop economically. Ireland has a strong history of influencing education in Africa through our missionary past and this association should be leveraged and continued. Support to capacity building of higher education institutes is extremely important as this is the training ground for the next generation of African leaders. In this context the Programme of Strategic Cooperation between Irish Aid and Higher Education and Research Institutes, and the fellowship programme, should be continued and expanded.

Ways of Working: How can the Government further strengthen its ways of working in delivering an effective aid programme, with a view to delivering real results in poverty reduction?

Continuing to encourage collaboration between actors in the HEI sector in Ireland will help strengthen aid effectiveness. There are many existing links between academic institutions and international organisations including multilateral organisations which could be shared and leveraged. Irish graduates are working in institutions across the world providing potential to learn and leverage. TCD academics have produced a body of work on policy coherence for development. The broadened focus of the Africa Strategy to include planning for aid, business and political relations, is a welcome reflection that some of this work is being applied. Results and accountability must be foremost within Irish Aid. The foundation of research and rigorous evaluation that distinguishes the academic contribution should be harnessed to ensure that programmes are of the highest quality.

Partnership between Irish Aid and the HEIs should be based on mutual respect. Researchers have an important role to play in relation to government by providing a critical voice. Recent communication around the re-opening of the Round 3 call for the PSC, was insufficient and unhelpful in the context of this relationship. We request that future processes be made fully transparent and decisions communicated clearly.

There are opportunities for Irish Aid to benefit from rigorous and innovative methodologies being used by researchers at TCD to evaluate and understand programme and project impact. We recognise that there are many approaches to understanding and applying evidence-based decision making. This variety is reflected within the university. We encourage Irish Aid to support efforts that have a strong evidence base and to ensure a strong focus on rigorous evaluation of all programmes. Two examples of methodological approaches which could support a results based culture in Irish Aid are as follows:

1. Evidence-based decision making

Decision makers within Irish Aid, and in the organisations, agencies and communities that you support, are facing the same information overload that is happening throughout society, politics, academia and our daily lives. A vast amount of information is being generated and made available, but not all of this is reliable, accurate or trustworthy. Ways are needed to summarise and synthesise this information so that decision makers are provided with a succinct and unbiased knowledge base to help them make well-informed choices. Over the last few decades this has become increasingly possible in health care, through the growing number of systematic reviews in which a focused question and clear eligibility criteria lead to the identification and appraisal of relevant studies; and the comparing, contrasting and, where relevant and possible, combining of their findings. Systematic reviews provide the vehicle by which evidence can be brought together in ways that minimize bias, avoid undue emphasis on single studies, and maximize the power of research that has already been done. They help decision makers to consider the totality of the relevant evidence and to base their choices on the estimates of the

likely effects of interventions and actions, which, in the best traditions of evidence based decision making, they can then combine with other knowledge such as feasibility, values and preferences. They help decision makers to be transparent about the processes they have followed, for example when this requires a balancing of the likely benefits and harms, with costs and resources. These issues are increasingly important in building trust at a time when unprecedented needs are confronted by unprecedented pressures on resources; be these human, financial, or environmental. Evidence Aid (www.EvidenceAid.org) is seeking to improve access to systematic reviews of relevance to natural disasters and other humanitarian emergencies and we urge Irish Aid to work with such initiatives and to embed a commitment to the role of systematic reviews in decision making within the new strategy.

2. Evaluation

TCD researchers would welcome a structured, discerning and inter-disciplinary approach to evaluating the impact and sustainability of Irish Aid projects and initiatives at the country level. Evaluations should be structured so that they allow the full impact of initiatives/projects to be quantified in a meaningful way and the sustainability of the initiative beyond the duration of the funding to be determined. Such an approach will allow meaningful policy recommendations to be made for the benefit of local government and institutions in Irish Aid partner countries and will also provide valuable lessons for the design of other such initiatives in the future. In the coming period it may be helpful for Irish Aid to consider and trial a number of different approaches to evaluation, in order to assess innovative approaches in this area, and to determine which approaches are suited to Irish Aid's work. Irish Aid could draw on the expertise and skills readily available within the academic community in Ireland through a consultation process when projects are in the design phase. This will allow for a more efficient use of tax payers' resources while providing a sound academic basis for impact evaluation.

Other comments: If the respondent seeks to address other issues – of direct relevance to the White Paper on Irish Aid – they should do so in this section.

TCD has had a productive relationship with Irish Aid to date and has engaged across many of Irish Aid's programmes. It is our intention that this relationship will be sustained and developed in years to come.

Progress Made: Comments from TCD researchers on specific points raised in the ‘Consultation Paper for the review of the White Paper on Irish Aid’

Table 1: General Overview:

Commitment	Progress	TCD Comment
Africa will remain the principal geographic focus for Irish Aid (p.88)	Since the White Paper between 70 and 80% of the aid programme has been directed at Sub Saharan Africa, one of the highest proportions amongst OECD donors. The new Africa strategy aims for a broader and deeper engagement with the continent. We will increase the number of key partner countries in which we work (p.73) In 2007 Malawi was designated Irish Aid’s ninth programme country.	A continued focus on Africa is welcome as is the new Africa Strategy which considers political and economic systems as well as aid to Africa. TCD work on policy coherence has informed policy and researchers will continue to engage with Irish Aid on this issue.
We will build a regional programme in South East Asia (p.90)	The regional approach in South East Asia has supported the Vietnam programme primarily, and also munitions deactivation programmes in Cambodia and Lao PDR, and private sector economic development in those countries through the Mekong Private Sector Development Facility.	Irish Aid’s commitments to Vietnam are welcome. Researchers working at TCD have expertise relating to social and economic development in Vietnam and to capacity building for health, specifically cardiac rehabilitation systems. Irish Aid’s support for Vietnam facilitates networking for these researchers who will contribute to building institutional capacity in the country. TCD researchers would also welcome a commitment by Irish Aid to extend its programme in Cambodia and Lao PDR. TCD researchers have successful research collaborations with local institutions in Cambodia and will continue to conduct research in this region in the future.
We will fund health research by Irish, international and developing country research institutions focussed on the specific health needs of the poorest countries	Research to deal with diseases of poverty and the health systems needs of low income countries is funded by Irish Aid and implemented by Irish researchers and institutions, global partnerships, regional bodies and country-level researchers. New products for neglected diseases are being delivered,	TCD researchers, particularly in the Centre for Global Health, have long-engaged with Irish Aid regarding health research and policy. Further funding for health research is needed. The investment in health research and teaching, such as in the Indigo programme, leads

(p.47)	evidence to guide health systems strengthening and quality of care is being produced, and health research capacity is being improved at country level.	directly to increased health research capacity in partner countries. The Indigo programme will support 12 PhD students to qualification, 8 of these students are African, 6 of whom will work in universities in Malawi, Ethiopia, Nigeria and Uganda on qualification. TCD's partnerships with universities in these countries as well as Kenya and South Africa, have been strengthened through this programme which will lead to future opportunities for collaboration and further capacity building.
We will conduct a major review of the fellowship programme to ensure that it continues to serve as a capacity-building tool for our partner countries (p.44)	Following on from an evaluation of the Fellowship Training Programme in 2007, a programmatic approach, linked to clear results, has been successfully adopted for the Programme aligning more closely to Irish Aid priorities at country level.	The fellowship programme is a key mechanism to support capacity building at higher education level in Irish Aid partner countries. This has been a successful means to establish partnership between Irish and overseas institutions, particularly at individual researcher level. The fellowship programme should be continued and a stronger network of alumni should be built to ensure continuation of links to Ireland and Irish Aid when students return to their home countries.
We will open an Irish Aid Information and Volunteering Centre to make more and better information available to the public about volunteering opportunities for individuals, institutions and communities across Ireland. (See p.105)	The Volunteering Centre will also manage those volunteering opportunities for which Irish Aid has direct responsibility, including internships within Irish Aid and placements through the UN Volunteers programme (p.104). The Irish Aid Information and Volunteering Centre opened in Dublin city centre in January 2008 and since then over 38,000 people have visited. Over 240 events are being held in the Centre each year and approximately 11,000 school children and students have participated in the education programme. The Centre has also provided information about volunteering opportunities. The Centre facilitated the recruitment of 85 UN Volunteer interns and 105 UN volunteer placements since 2006.	The Volunteering Centre has been a useful resource for students at undergraduate and postgraduate level. In addition the meeting facility has been used by TCD researchers and networks with TCD involvement such as the Development Studies Association of Ireland and the Irish African Partnership for Research Capacity Building. It is very helpful to these networks to have a neutral space to meet. There has also been mutually beneficial knowledge exchange with TIDI promoting the activities of the centre and vice versa.

<p>We will continue to provide support for development education at primary, secondary and tertiary level in Ireland and through informal channels of education (p.107)</p>	<p>Irish Aid published a new strategy for development education in 2007 that aims to ensure that development education reaches a wide audience in Ireland. Integration of development education in the formal and non formal education systems is one of the key objectives of the strategy. Since 2007 Irish Aid has provided funding of over €20 million for development education activity.</p>	<p>Irish Aid will no longer support formalised development education at third level. This is disappointing as TCD has managed several successful grants through the Department of Economics and School of Education which have included development education modules for undergraduate and postgraduate students as well as the very successful Millennium Development Goals lecture series. The rationale for this decision is not clear. The formal education system at third level should still be targeted as a means of exposing large groups of young people to development education and increasing the engagement of this important section of the public with international development and Irish Aid's work.</p>
<p>We will develop a programme for more strategic engagement between Irish Aid and higher education and research institutes in Ireland. Rollout of the programme will begin in 2007 (p.106)</p>	<p>Since 2007 Irish Aid's Programme of Strategic Cooperation has promoted collaborative partnerships for research and learning between higher education institutes in Ireland and in developing countries. The aim of the programme is to promote pro-poor policy making and to further develop the skills and knowledge needed to respond to development challenges and opportunities in partner countries. Under the current phase there is a strong focus on strengthening capacity of the higher education sector in Ireland. €12 million has been allocated to eight full projects and five networking grants. A transition phase has recently been launched with a focus on Hunger, Health and HIV and AIDS and Education.</p>	<p>The Programme of Strategic Cooperation (PSC) has been successful, to an extent, in strengthening the capacity of the higher education sector in Ireland to collaborate around international development and to engage with developing country partners through research and teaching to build their capacity.</p> <p>Increased collaboration between Irish HEIs is seen in the emerging and strengthening of fora such as the Development Studies Association of Ireland, Project Promoters' Group, Irish African Partnership for Research Capacity Building, Irish Forum for Global Health etc. In addition individual institutions have achieved more coordination of activity around international development through initiatives such as TIDI at TCD, the Human Development Initiative at UCD, and the Global Development Institute at UCC.</p> <p>The work of building capacity among Irish institutions</p>

		<p>is not over, however and it would be a pity to lose the momentum created by the PSC's first two rounds. While cuts to funding the PSC are understandable, they are disappointing. It will be important to support and continue associations between HEIs such as those mentioned above, both to strengthen capacity among the HEIs in alignment with principles of aid effectiveness, and to create the potential to inform Irish Aid policy in a coherent and consistent manner.</p> <p>Without the PSC, HEIs would have little practical incentive to collaborate in the successful manner that has begun in recent years.</p>
<p>We will provide financial support for events to mark Africa Day, 25 May, in order to promote a more positive and comprehensive understanding of Africa in Ireland (See 34</p>	<p>Irish Aid, in close cooperation with community groups and city councils in Dublin and Limerick, has successfully organised events to mark Africa Day since 2008. It has now become an established event in the annual development calendar. The high level of participation in the various events by members of the public and the level of media coverage provides a strong platform for raising awareness and understanding of Africa and of the results achieved by Irish Aid.</p>	<p>TCD received funding from Irish Aid for a public lecture and academic discussion in celebration of Africa Day in 2009, 2010 and 2011 and collaboration is continuing in 2012, despite the lack of available funding. Feedback from the Group of African Ambassadors suggests that an academic discussion is an important event in the calendar of events for Africa Day and one that encourages a broader public understanding of African issues.</p> <p>We hope to continue to mark Africa Day for years to come, however continued support will be required.</p>

Table 2: Comments on specific areas:

Commitment	Progress	TCD Comment
<p>We will support multilateral 'Aid for Trade' initiatives for Least Developed Countries to help build</p>	<p>We have provided approximately €19m in funding from 2007 to 2011 to a number of such Aid for Trade initiatives.</p>	<p>TCD researchers welcome Irish Aid's support for the 'Aid for Trade' initiative. They also recommend that Irish Aid add to its focus the promotion of micro-</p>

their capacity to trade and to take account of the impact of multilateral trade agreements (p.66) Irish Aid has provided financial support through multilateral organisations such as the WTO and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) for trade-related assistance for the LDCs and other vulnerable countries.

enterprise development, growth and expansion as a means of income diversification and poverty alleviation.

Irish Aid's policy of concentrating its bilateral aid on the social sectors, and leaving 'Aid for Trade' to multilateral initiatives, is well-founded. It is to be noted that Least Developed Countries still receive only a small percentage of the total 'Aid for Trade' donated. Ireland should continue to push (in the EU, OECD and other multilateral fora) for a greater focus on LDCs, and a greater pro-poor focus for this type of aid.

In the context of the DFA's Africa Strategy, and general economic pressures, there are voices in the Irish private sector that call for aid to be used to facilitate Irish business interests. Irish Aid should continue to resist any kind of 'tying' of aid, or use of aid to assist the Irish private sector. (Other elements of the Department may support Irish business, of course, but this should be clearly separate from development aid policy).

In regard to EU trade policy, and the envisaged removal of countries from the Generalised System of Preferences scheme; Ireland should insist that Income per capita is not the only criterion used to determine the needs of developing states (poverty levels should also be considered).

TCD researchers would also welcome a structured approach to evaluating the impact and sustainability of initiatives such as 'Aid for Trade'. Some

		recommendations are made in the table below
We will maintain our focus on the provision of high-quality primary education, situated within comprehensive national education plans (p.43)	Irish Aid launched its Education Policy in 2008 and made the provision of high quality primary education situated within comprehensive national education plans its core focus. Irish Aid education investments, since the launch of the White Paper amount to €50.1m (12.8%) in 2006, €72m (12.1%) in 2007, €83.4m (12.8%) in 2008 and €64m (12.8%) in 2009 and . Each year this financial support has been channelled through four complementary channels within the Irish Aid programme. The main channel is through direct support to the national education plans in Programme Countries. Support is also provided through selected Global Partners, for example the Global Partnership for Education (formerly known as FTI). In addition, support is provided through civil society partners for their education programmes, and through the emergency and recovery support.	<p>TCD researchers welcome the investments that Irish Aid has made in primary education interventions. They recommend that careful attention be paid to the evaluation of the impact of such interventions with particular focus on the quality of education provision. The impact on outcomes such as school attendance, teacher-student ratios and broader learning outcomes should be carefully considered.</p> <p>TCD researchers would also welcome a move toward interventions at second and third level which will help contribute to addressing the significant skills shortages in labour markets that prevent the growth and expansion of domestic industry. Resources invested at these levels of education have the potential to have wide reaching impacts on economic growth and development. Some of our experience working with African partners through the Irish African Partnership for Research Capacity Building suggests that there is a strong need for capacity building in science and technology particularly ICT.</p>
We will support activities across the programme to increase access to safe water and basic sanitation (p.63)	Irish Aid recognises that the water and sanitation challenges are central to human development and economic growth. For example, in 2010 over €7 million was allocated to support water, sanitation and hygiene programmes.	TCD researchers recognise the importance of water and sanitation challenges and welcome Irish Aid's efforts in these areas. They would like to highlight the importance of community participation for the sustainability of projects of this kind in the long term and would welcome the inclusion of participatory approaches in future projects.
We will identify new and innovative ways to reduce vulnerability, provide social protection and build productive	Since the publication of the White Paper in 2006, Irish Aid has progressively increased its focus on social protection and support to a wide range of social protection tools (for example cash transfers, school feeding, free health care). This support	TCD researchers would welcome a clear and well-defined strategy for assessing the impact of social protection programmes and would like to emphasise the importance of understanding the effectiveness of

<p>capacity.</p>	<p>has contributed to addressing inequalities and poverty in our countries of engagement</p>	<p>different social protection tools. Careful evaluation of both is important for drawing meaningful policy recommendations for the future.</p> <p>TCD researchers would also welcome the inclusion of gender considerations in the implementation of social protection programmes, particularly in terms of how and to whom resources are transferred.</p>
<p>We are committed to developing programmes that address the key causes of illness and poor health among the poorest and most vulnerable people and to strengthening health systems in the poorest countries (p.45)</p>	<p>Over the period covered by the White Paper to date, more than 35% of Ireland’s bilateral aid has been spent on Health, Education and HIV and AIDS. Nutrition is increasingly emphasised in health and AIDS programming across Irish Aid. Combating diseases of poverty, provision of basic health services and reaching rural communities are priorities in all Irish Aid programming at global, regional and country levels.</p>	<p>TCD researchers would like to emphasise the importance of community participation and pro-active campaigns in the design of health and nutrition interventions. The evaluation of the effectiveness and sustainability of such interventions is also of paramount importance.</p> <p>There are a growing number of researchers at TCD who are working on disability and development issues. We would welcome a greater attention to disability issues in Irish Aid policy since these issues are at the intersection of health, poverty and marginalisation.</p>
<p>We will spend at least €100 million per year combating HIV and AIDS and other communicable diseases in developing countries (p.48)</p>	<p>Since the publication of the White Paper in 2006 to date, Irish Aid has delivered on this commitment and spent over €100 million annually on HIV and AIDS and other communicable diseases in developing countries through multilateral and bilateral support and through support to the work of NGOs and a number of Irish institutions.</p>	
<p>We will establish a new Inter-Departmental Committee on Development to strengthen coherence in the Government’s approach to development and to make best use of the expertise and skills available across the public service (p.96)</p>	<p>An Inter-Departmental Committee on Development (IDCD) was established in April 2007 and serves as a forum for inter-departmental dialogue on the development implications of government policies and activities and on the opportunities for harnessing expertise and skills from across the public service to support Ireland’s ODA programme.</p>	<p>TCD researchers welcome Irish Aid’s commitment to cooperation with colleagues across the public sector and would in particular like to emphasise the significant opportunities for consultation and collaboration with researchers in HEIs whose expertise and skills can make valuable contributions to the design, implementation and evaluation of Irish Aid projects. Such cooperation will make much more efficient and effective use of Irish Aid funds than relying on external consultants.</p>

