

World Vision Ireland Submission to the Review of the White Paper on Irish Aid

Introduction:

World Vision Ireland is a child focussed NGO with long-term development projects based in six African nations; Mauritania, Kenya, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda and Sierra Leone. It is part of World Vision International, one of the leading development and humanitarian organisations in the world. It has been active since 1983 and is headed by an Irish Board of directors and is supported by 16 staff members. It is a registered Irish charity (Number 6434) with audited accounts lodged in the Company's Office to be viewed by the general public.

World Vision Ireland appreciates this opportunity to contribute to the Review of the White Paper on Irish Aid at a time of tremendous change in the developing world. This paper briefly outlines World Vision Ireland's view on how Irish Aid's outstanding work can be strengthened.

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

The 2006 White Paper has been of huge value for development agencies. Its chief achievement lies in its provision of guidance to Irish NGOs by advocating a poverty-focused approach to international aid. Additionally it has contributed to Ireland's reputation as one of the most effective aid donors on the international stage today.

We welcome the Irish Government's implementation of some of the key commitments set out in the 2006 White Paper. These include:

Hunger Task Force

The Irish Government was successful in establishing a Hunger Task Force, as pledged in the 2006 White Paper. Its report, which was launched in 2008, highlighted three key priorities which would have the greatest impact on reducing and ultimately eliminating hunger¹. World Vision Ireland was particularly encouraged to see that one of these priorities focused on implementing programmes to reduce maternal and infant undernutrition. In 2010 Ireland pledged its commitment to the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN)² road map, which focuses on improving country

¹ Hunger Task Force, Report to the Government, September 2008

² Scaling Up Nutrition: A Framework For Action (SUN) September 2010

level nutrition programming, and the 1,000 days initiative to combat under nutrition in the first 1000 days of a child's life. We believe that SUN/ 1000 days initiatives have a real potential to make a sustainable difference to the lives of millions. Indeed, these projects complement World Vision International's campaign 'The Best Start' which focuses on saving children's lives in their first 1,000 days. It also correlates with World Vision Ireland's Irish Aid funded AIM (Access: Infant & Maternal Health) Programme, which targets pregnant women and children in their first 1000 days, aiming to reduce infant and maternal mortality by 25% in 10 target areas by 2015.

Fragile states

World Vision Ireland welcomes Irish Aid's ongoing commitment to fragile states Sierra Leone and Liberia as set out in the 2006 White Paper. We would like to congratulate Irish Aid on its success in supporting both countries in transitioning from fragile to developmental status. We would also like to acknowledge the humanitarian work Irish Aid has carried out in other fragile states, such as Somalia, Sudan & South Sudan. As Sierra Leone and Liberia are no longer fragile states we would recommend that the updated White Paper names Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan as its fragile state priority countries while making its continued commitment to Sierra Leone and Liberia clear under a developmental rather than fragile states heading.

HIV & AIDS

The 2006 White Paper named HIV & AIDS as a priority area. We recognise that Irish aid is committed to HIV & AIDS with almost €100 million dedicated to this and other communicable diseases in 2011. World Vision Ireland programmes have been successful in creating awareness of HIV & AIDS with the support of Irish Aid funding. For example, between 2007 and 2010 in Tanzania, youth made vulnerable by HIV & AIDS availed of formal education and training. 95% of the community are now aware of HIV & AIDS. We hope that the updated White Paper will continue to prioritise HIV & AIDS and dedicate a targeted budget to tackle this and other communicable diseases.

Omission from 2006 White Paper: Children as a priority group

The 2006 White Paper does not specifically target children as a priority group. While many of its strategic priorities – Hunger, HIV & AIDS and Education – have a strong impact on children, there is no exclusive reference to Irish Aid's dedication to children and their rights. The Irish Government made its commitment to the rights of the child clear when it ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and signed the Millennium Declaration in 2000. However, the 2006 White Paper does not exclusively prioritise children or pledge to protect and advocate

for their rights. As a child focused NGO, World Vision Ireland believes that this is a gaping omission from the 2006 paper and should be included in the reviewed edition.

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?

Domestic Context

The economic downturn in Ireland has forced successive Governments to make cuts across all areas of the budget. It has led to the reduction of Ireland's ODA by 21.5% since 2006. While we appreciate that there is a need for austerity, and welcome the fact that severe cuts to the ODA budget were avoided in Budget 2012, we recommend that the Government upholds its promise to dedicate 0.7% of its budget to ODA by 2015.

Stable and consistent funding is essential if programmes are to be successful and results sustainable.

Ireland is renowned, respected and admired internationally for the leading role it has played in the area of overseas aid. At a time when Ireland's reputation has been in question because of its financial problems, it makes sense to prioritise and promote the country's strengths. If Ireland were to renege on its promise of 0.7 by 2015, it would risk losing international respect.

In recessionary times the public demand that taxpayer's money is spent wisely and there is an increased emphasis on value for money. By focussing on the poorest and most marginalised children, Irish Aid would break a generational cycle of poverty and affect real and sustainable change – providing value for taxpayer's money spent.

Global Context

The context in which aid programmes are implemented has changed dramatically since 2006. As noted in the Consultation Paper, the economies of many developing countries in East Asia and Latin America have grown exponentially, global poverty levels have been reduced, and progress has been made towards meeting some Millennium Development Goals³ (MDGs).

However, many areas have seen little improvement. Of particular concern is the lack of progress in meeting MDGs 4 and 5, which call for the reduction of child mortality and the improvement of maternal health respectively. Of the 67 countries defined as having high child mortality rates, only 10 are currently on track to

³ WHO (2012) *Millennium Development Goal drinking water target met*. Available at: http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2012/drinking_water_20120306/en/

meet MDG 4⁴. MDG 5 is the worst performing of all the goals- just 13 developing countries are expected to reach the target⁵.

Most alarmingly, no country in West Africa is expected to meet either MDG 4 or 5⁶. The West Africa region also continues to rank at the bottom of most developmental indicators including GDP per capita, proportion of the population living on less than \$1.25 a day, years of schooling, and maternal and infant mortality rates⁷. Additionally, of the 26 states designated as having 'low human development' in the Human Development Index, 12 are in West Africa.

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?

Children

As a child-focused NGO, World Vision Ireland welcomes the White Papers remarks on children's needs in the areas of education, health and food security⁸. However, the document should make a specific commitment to prioritise the welfare of children. Such a commitment is necessary because children are the most vulnerable group in society. They are unable to either defend their own rights or participate in decision-making processes that affect them. This disempowerment is especially damaging because children's rapid development means they have a very unique set of needs. The neglect of these childhood needs can often have irreversible consequences in later life. For instance children who are undernourished in the first two years of life are prone to infection and disease in adulthood⁹. Similarly a lack of basic education in childhood leads to an increased likelihood of unemployment and poverty in later life¹⁰.

Today's children will soon be driving their country's economy, Government, and civil society. Their social, physical and intellectual health is thus a crucial determinant of the developing world's progress. With Irish Aid's increasing focus on 'value-for-money'¹¹, prioritising children will maximise the impact of aid expenditure.

⁴ United Nations. (2010). *MDG 4 Factsheet: Reduce Child Mortality*

⁵ United Nations. (2010, September 20-22). *MDG 5 Factsheet: Reduce Maternal Mortality*

⁶ Lozano, R., et al (2011). Progress towards Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5 on maternal and child mortality: an updated systematic analysis. *The Lancet, Volume 378, Issue 9797*, 1139-1165.

⁷ Human Development Index. (2011). *International Human Development Indicators*.

⁸ Irish Aid White Paper (2006) p. 43, 45,51.

⁹ World Vision. (2009). *Child Health Now*.

¹⁰ UNESCO. (2010). *EFA Global Monitoring Report: Reaching the Marginalised*.

¹¹ Irish Aid (2011) Section 4.18, *Consultation for the Review of the White Paper on Irish Aid*.

Gender

Alongside children, women are one of society's most vulnerable groups. They are disproportionately likely to experience poverty, be illiterate and drop out of school, and face unique health risks related to pregnancy or childbirth¹². Women are also especially vulnerable to Gender Based- Violence (GBV). In addition to being a human rights violation, GBV has been shown to be a major impediment to achieving other development goals in areas including health, education and livelihoods¹³. In order to ameliorate this impediment to development, the White Paper should continue its commitment to reducing GBV in the developing world and pledge to fully implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325.

Basic Needs

Health is one of the most basic of needs and HIV & AIDS has represented one of the largest threats to the health of millions in the developing world for decades. Irish Aid made a strong commitment to reduce the prevalence of HIV & AIDS in the 2006 White Paper. Since then the work of Irish Aid and countless other agencies has led to the reversal of HIV & AIDS rates in most world regions. However, whilst this represents significant progress, there is major concern that this success will lead development agencies to make an overly large shift away from HIV & AIDS work. This could lead to the reversal of the progress made. Irish Aid should therefore build upon current gains by continuing to prioritise HIV & AIDS in the updated White Paper.

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?

The updated White Paper must make a clear and specific commitment to children

Despite the fact that the Irish Government internationally declared its commitment to prioritising the rights of the child by ratifying the Convention on the Right of the Child and signing the Millennium Declaration, it does not make its commitment to children clear in the current White Paper on Irish Aid. While the White Paper's strategic priorities such as Hunger, Education & HIV & AIDS do impact children, the document itself does not ensure that children are prioritised. A child's needs are very different to those of an adult and children often suffer disproportionately as a result of hunger, disease and conflict. Therefore, World Vision Ireland believes that the updated White Paper on Irish Aid must feature a clear and exclusive statement on the Irish Government's commitment to children as a target group and should list children as one of its strategic priorities.

¹² United Nations. (2010). *The World's Women 2010*

¹³ UN Task Force on Violence Against Women (2010). *Delivering as One on Violence Against Women: From Intent to Action*. UNFPA and UN Women.

The White Paper should prioritise the achievement of Millennium Development Goals 4 & 5

World Vision Ireland is particularly concerned about the lack of progress on Millennium Development Goals 4 & 5. The Irish Government's Hunger Task force prioritises the implementation of programmes to reduce maternal and infant undernutrition. In 2010 the Irish Government pledged its commitment to the 1000 days initiative to combat undernutrition in the first 1,000 days of a child's life. The Government must state these very strong and clear commitments in the updated White Paper. The paper should explicitly recognise the fact that MDGs 4&5 are worryingly behind schedule and should clarify Irish Aid's commitment to the achievement of these goals by prioritising maternal and child health programmes.

The updated paper should prioritise the West Africa Region

World Vision Ireland welcomes Irish Aid's primary focus on Africa. However, we believe that the updated White Paper should put specific targets in place for the West Africa region in light of the fact that it continues to rank at the bottom of most development indicators. Ireland can have the most impact on development by focusing on areas where the need is greatest. By focussing on West Africa Irish Aid will target the world's poorest and most vulnerable people and play a role in averting future emergency situations.

The White Paper must prioritise post emergency recovery programmes in order to ensure that sustainable development is achieved and further emergencies are avoided

World Vision Ireland welcomes the current White Paper's commitment to fragile states¹⁴ and to post-emergency recovery programmes¹⁵. Such programmes have contributed significantly to the stabilisation of emergency situations in states such as Liberia and Sierra Leone. However, many countries do lose support or aid once an immediate emergency has passed and global media interest has changed focus. Numerous studies show that when fragile states are given financial support which is then suddenly withdrawn or reduced, the impact can be harmful to long-term growth and can endanger stability¹⁶. Therefore, the updated White Paper should commit specific resources to post emergency recovery programmes that will provide recovery and rehabilitation assistance in the years after the emergency situation has subsided. We also recommend that Irish Aid continues its valuable support of Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan and that the updated White Paper names these countries as its fragile state priorities.

¹⁴ Irish Aid White Paper (2006) P. 73

¹⁵ Irish Aid White Paper (2006) P.34-36.

¹⁶ Bulir, A., & Hamann, A. J. (2008). Volatility of Development Aid: From the Frying Pan into the Fire? *World Development*, Vol. 36, No. 10. See also: Kharas, H. (2008). Measuring the Cost of Aid Volatility. *Wolffensohn Center for Development Working Paper No. 3*.

Conclusion:

World Vision Ireland welcomes the review of the White Paper on Irish Aid and acknowledges it as a clear statement of this Government's commitment to effective Overseas Development Assistance. We are grateful for the opportunity to contribute to this review and we hope that this submission will be of use. We are available to cooperate further with Irish Aid should they need clarification on this submission or additional assistance over the review process.