

Our Partners

Civil Society: working for the common good

Non-governmental organisations promote participation, good governance, services for poor communities and growth

€20 million was provided to Mísean Cara to support the development work of missionary organisations

Irish Aid's Civil Society Section channels funding to leading Irish and international non-governmental organisations working in development and indigenous organisations in developing countries. This is one of the key aspects of Irish Aid's work.

Multi-Annual Programme Scheme

Five leading Irish non-governmental organisations received a total of €70 million in 2008, under the Multi Annual Programme Scheme. It provides guaranteed funding over a number of years to Christian Aid, Concern, Goal, Self Help Africa and Trócaire. It is used for a wide range of development programmes. For example, in Kenya, Trócaire and its partners worked to influence key provisions of the peace agreement that followed the post-election outbreak of violence and ethnic conflict. Trócaire's partners were instrumental in ensuring that gender-related crimes were classified as crimes which do not enjoy amnesty under the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission Act 2008.

Block Grants

The Programme for Government committed to further development of funding mechanisms for non-governmental organisations. In line with this, the number of organisations receiving block grants increased in 2008 from six to 23. These grants allow organisations to strengthen their programme quality and undertake longer-term development projects.

Irish Aid supports leading Irish non-governmental organisations in their work fighting hunger and promoting development.



Twenty-year-old Martha Hernández Aguilar works as a coffee cupper in the RAOS cooperative in Honduras, which is supported by Irish Aid. Photo: Aoife Helly

Civil Society Fund

In addition to large scale funding, Irish Aid also supports smaller organisations through the Civil Society Fund. In 2008, over €46 million was disbursed from this fund, facilitating projects in areas such as livelihood security, water and sanitation, education, human rights, gender, health and HIV and AIDS across almost 30 countries. For example, Irish Aid supported non-governmental organisations in El Salvador working in the poorest municipalities of the country and organisations working with indigenous communities in Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala and Belize. Irish Aid also supports the work of Irish missionaries abroad. In 2008, €20 million was provided to Mísean Cara, which represents over 80 missionary organisations working in 90 countries.

Fair Trade

In 2008 Irish Aid supported the work of the Irish Fairtrade Network in Central America (€1.3 million) and East Africa (€2 million). In El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, the network helps farmers to sell their coffee, cacao and sesame seeds at a fair price. The additional income they receive improves family nutrition and allows children to attend school. It is also re-invested in community development and welfare schemes. In East Africa, the Irish Fairtrade Network supports over 435,000 farmers in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Ethiopia.

A CIVIL SOCIETY POLICY

IRISH AID'S CIVIL SOCIETY POLICY WAS PUBLISHED IN 2008. ITS OBJECTIVES ARE:

TO CREATE AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS TO ORGANISE AND ENGAGE WITH THEIR OWN BROADER CONSTITUENCIES;

TO SUPPORT THE ROLE OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS IN PROMOTING PARTICIPATION AND GOOD GOVERNANCE, PRO-POOR SERVICE DELIVERY AND GROWTH;

TO BUILD A CONSTITUENCY FOR DEVELOPMENT, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE.

Multilateral: Coordinating global action

'Multilaterals' are large international organisations, such as those of the United Nations and the European Union. Their contribution is vital to improving aid and boosting trade. Over one third of Ireland's official development assistance is channelled through the multilateral system. Ireland is an influential stakeholder in the UN, EU and World Bank, contributing funding and expertise. These multilaterals have key advantages in the fight against poverty and support for their work is a central component of Irish Aid's multi-faceted approach to fighting global poverty and hunger.

Irish Aid is helping to drive reform of the United Nations system by supporting the 'one UN' approach to aid and development.

The global food crisis of 2008, provoked by the rise in fuel prices, led Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to set up a special task force and led the European Union to allocate one billion Euro to address the crisis.

The European Union provided a total of over €49 billion in aid in 2008

The United Nations

Almost 80% of Irish Aid funding to the United Nations in 2008 was provided to six priority partners, which Irish Aid believes to be the most effective in promoting development. These were the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the World Health Organisation and the United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS).

The majority of funding is not earmarked, which gives the partners flexibility in responding to priorities, and deepens Irish Aid's engagement and influence at a strategic level. This strategic engagement with the United Nations was highlighted during 2008 when the Irish Ambassador to the United Nations, along with his Tanzanian counterpart, led discussions on the 'one UN' recommendations for reform of the United Nations.

The recommendations had been produced by the High-Level Panel on System-Wide Coherence. At the heart of the system-wide coherence agenda is a move towards a more coordinated and efficient United Nations system at country level, known as the 'one UN' approach. This was piloted in a number of countries in 2008, including three Irish Aid programme countries (Mozambique, Tanzania and Vietnam). Irish Aid has provided €2 million to support these pilots.

Irish Aid uses a variety of means to monitor the work of United Nations organisations. This includes participation in the Multilateral Organisations Performance Assessment Network, a group of like-minded donors that evaluate the performance of UN agencies and other multilateral organisations and helps to improve aid quality.

The World Bank Group

Irish Aid works closely with the Department of Finance on policy relating to the World Bank. In 2008, support was provided for a number of World Bank funds aligned with Irish Aid's priorities. These included a donation of €500,000 to the World Bank Institute, the training agency of the World Bank, for projects in the areas of education, health and water and sanitation; and €500,000 to the International Finance Corporation, which fosters private sector development in developing countries. This funding was earmarked for the corporation's Conflict-Affected States in Africa Initiative, which aims to tackle the particular obstacles faced by the private sector in fragile and post-conflict countries.

Debt Relief

Irish Aid also supported a capacity-building programme run by Debt Relief International, a London-based research and training organisation. This helps highly indebted poor countries to manage their debt in a sustainable manner.

The European Union

The European Union is by far the world's largest aid donor. In 2008, Europe's official aid figures reached more than €49 billion, including contributions from member states. Ireland contributes to this, both through the general European Union budget and through the European Development Fund, to which Ireland provided just under €24 million in 2008.

The global food security crisis provoked an additional response from the European Union. In December 2008, the European Parliament and the European Council adopted a regulation establishing a €1 billion food facility. The facility will operate for a period of three years, from 2009 to 2011, providing additional funding to relevant government and non-governmental organisations in the most vulnerable countries worldwide.

Aid for Trade

Ireland supports the capacity of developing countries to trade through initiatives to increase employment and production, especially in rural areas. In 2008, Ireland contributed to the ongoing negotiations of the Economic Partnership Agreements between the European Union and African, Caribbean and Pacific States. Similarly, Ireland is engaged in the World Trade Organisation, helping to ensure that global trade negotiations reflect development aspects and the needs of developing countries. Irish Aid also supports several 'Aid for Trade' organisations.

FIGHTING HUNGER AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS

THE GLOBAL FOOD CRISIS OF 2008, PROVOKED BY THE RISE IN FUEL PRICES, LED BAN KI-MOON, THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS, TO SET UP A SPECIAL TASK FORCE. COMPRISING THE HEADS OF THE RELEVANT UNITED NATIONS AGENCIES, THE WORLD BANK AND THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND, THE TASK FORCE PRODUCED A COMPREHENSIVE FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION. THIS PLAN INCLUDED THE FOLLOWING PRIORITIES:

THE PROVISION OF EMERGENCY FOOD AID AND NUTRITION INTERVENTIONS;

THE INCREASE OF FOOD PRODUCTION BY SMALLHOLDER FARMERS (IN PARTICULAR WOMEN), AND THE IMPROVEMENT OF THEIR ACCESS TO INTERNATIONAL FOOD MARKETS; AND THE EXPANSION OF SOCIAL PROTECTION MECHANISMS.

IRISH AID'S AFRICAN PROGRAMME COUNTRIES ARE AMONGST THE HARDEST HIT BY THE GLOBAL FOOD CRISIS, AND IRISH AID IS SUPPORTING AND MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMPREHENSIVE FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION IN THESE COUNTRIES.