



Submission to the Irish Aid White Paper Review

2.0 Response

2.1 Introduction and background information to their organisation

The Africa Centre is the leading African organisation in Ireland and the leading African organisation in Ireland's Development Education sector. It was founded in the year 2000 by a group of activists in the African immigrant community who wanted the community to have a voice and promote their active participation in Irish society. It has received funding from Irish Aid a unit within the Department of Foreign Affairs with responsibility for managing Ireland's Overseas Aid Programme. The Africa Centre has made major contributions to Development Education discourse, policy and practice during the last ten years through the promotion of debates on international development issues in its annual lectures, annual community forums, engagement with local radio programmes around Ireland and its highly successful poster campaign 'Africa also Smiles' that featured in the 2011 Junior Certificate examination paper.

The Africa Centre Mission: To facilitate the meaningful inclusion of African People as equals in all social, political and economic aspects of Irish Life

Specific Objectives:

1. Excel at Community Dialogue and Inclusion
2. Promote the inclusion of multiple African Perspectives in Development Education discourse policy and practice
3. Deliver value for money outcomes to funders
4. Actively enlist, enable and include more of the African Community in all areas of work of the Africa centre

The Africa Centre has contributed to building the capacity of the DE sector through the design and delivery of Development Education programmes and training which present balanced Global South (African) perspectives for the Development Education sector in Ireland. The Africa Centre also works towards managing and mobilising the support of African communities and Diaspora living in Ireland to

support ODA. The Africa Centre holds a unique position in the Development Education sector and works continuously to promote more balanced images and messages in both the development and development education sectors.

The organisation is a registered Company limited by guarantee under the legal name of 'Africa Solidarity Centre Limited' and it is operating as 'Africa Centre'. Africa Centre is also a registered charity, with the Office of the Revenue Commissioners, under registration number CHY 14980. This status grants the Centre tax exemption, which applies to income Tax/Corporation Tax, Capital Gains Tax and Deposit Interest Retention Tax as well as to the income and property of the organisation.

Activities undertaken to prepare their response

In order to achieve a contribution of multiple perspectives for the review of the White Paper on Irish Aid, The Africa Centre took a cross sectoral approach. The review was informed by consultations with African Community groups in Dublin, Sligo, Kilkenny and Galway. We also organised two specific focus group discussions on the review in Dublin between staff, board members and NGO's that collaborate with Africa Centre. Furthermore, to accommodate individuals who could not attend focus groups we disseminated a survey monkey questionnaire. Finally we carried out a literature review on the changing context locally and globally since the white paper was published in 2006.

2.2. Progress Made

Africa Centre supports the Irish ODA programme and acknowledges its progress in relation to the Millennium Development Goals, the Rapid Response Initiative and the formation of the Conflict and Resolution Unit.

- The millennium development goals have been greatly advanced in the last number of years in Irish Aid priority countries and much of this success can be attributed to the support of Irish Aid projects.
- The establishment of the Rapid Response Initiative has enabled an effective response to humanitarian emergencies since its formation.
- The Conflict and Resolution Unit which was established in 2007 has provided invaluable support to conflict blighted areas and has the potential to make a long lasting positive impact on the lives of people who live within those countries.

However for the purpose of Africa Centres submission Africa Centre requests that the reviewed White Paper on Irish Aid should commit to:

- Improved trade relations between Africa and Ireland
- Deeper public engagement through the promotion of fair and balanced images and messages of the Global South
- Increased inclusion of the African Diaspora in both of the above
- Conflict Resolution
- Africa Liberation Day

Africa Centre would also like to draw on the points which are raised in the IDEA submission in terms of development education. Ireland has become an international

leader in the area of development education. This is in no small part to the funding and assistance of Irish Aid. Ireland is one of the most advanced countries at a European level both in relation to the support structures made available to these programmes and the quality of their delivery. It is vital that Ireland maintain this level of commitment to such programmes as it enables the Irish public to have a greater understanding of issues relating to African countries and to the work which Irish Aid and Irish Aid funded organisations do. It is also a crucial element in allowing the public to engage fully with political processes and to know their own rights (IDEA white paper submission 2012).

Irish Aid has been working towards a whole government approach towards aid this is commendable as it is essential for each government department to be on the same page when it comes to the policies which surround aid and Africa. However there is more progress to be made in this area in the coming years. Africa Centre would like to agree on the points made by the DOCHAS review in relation to the predictability of AID. As the level of aid has decreased by some 30% in the years since 2008 it is even more essential that aid is sent to recipients in a way which allows them to plan for its effective use and the implementation of projects. The unpredictability of these cuts is hindering the effectiveness of aid and it is important that Irish Aid address this in order to cement their position as a reliable donor (Dochas white paper submission 2012).

2.3. Changing context

Much has changed within Irish society in the six years since the Irish Aid White Paper was published in 2006. Fundamentally, Ireland has become a country which is rich in diversity, it is important that this diversity is fully understood, respected and indeed in many instances utilised. In 2006 the number of African's living in Ireland was 42,764¹. The 2012 census illustrated that this has risen to 58,697 African's living in Ireland, an increase of 32% from 2006.

Many of these people are actively involved in development discourse on an individual or community level and they provide Irish Aid with an ideal resource as tax payers and it is vital that this is fully recognised. Members of the African Diaspora hold crucial expertise and insights that could greatly increase the effectiveness of Aid if they are engaged with effectively. This is increasingly important given the changing economic profile of the country. Most importantly as well many African living in Ireland are not only tax payers, but are sending remittance home to families and friends, which contribute to sustainable development in African countries than aid.

2.4. Key Issues

2.4.1. Government respond to the key issues

In 2006 Ireland appeared to be a rising economy, in 2012 Ireland is a struggling economy. This means that Ireland simply cannot afford the level of aid that had

¹ <http://census.cso.ie/Census/TableViewer/tableView.aspx?ReportId=77133>)

projected in 2006. It is therefore more important than ever that the aid which is given is as effective as possible. Thus Africa Centre suggests that Irish Aid engages with Africans living in Ireland to form an advisory group on Aid which would allow Irish Aid to benefit from the opinions and experience of this relatively untapped resource. It is also imperative that Irish Aid works to strengthen the capacity of African Organisations so that they in turn can help Irish Aid to progress the aims laid out in the White Paper. Irish Aid should also recognise the great personal sacrifice that those who take part in such community development undertake, they often juggle their personal household responsibilities, their employment and their community work. It is also necessary for Irish Aid to invest in development education at a national level so that Diaspora communities are given the opportunity to participate in the political sphere and understand and engage with the policies which affect their lives and society in general.

Ireland has a long history of providing untied aid to African countries. However the Africa Centre would like to highlight the important position that trade holds in lifting countries out of poverty and thus helping to progress all of the White Papers key aims. It seems that the way in which Ireland views its trade relationship with African countries leads to an equality in Trade.

All of Ireland's programme countries on the African continent imported more goods from Ireland than Ireland imported from them in the fifteen year period between 1995 and 2010².

In fact during the same period Ireland's imports from these countries decreased. This can largely be attributed to a change in the way which Ireland deals with its tea and coffee processing and the closure of sugar processing plants. The Africa Centre suggests that Irish Aid works with individual African governments, specifically the governments in its project countries to improve industries and thus increase trade. Irish Aid should consider sending industry experts to assist African industries to grow successfully. Furthermore Ireland should concentrate on importing finished products from African countries in order to stimulate industry.

While it is heartening to see that Ireland has developed a plan for increasing trade with African countries it must be noted that this plan places an emphasis on Irish companies entering the African market and speaks sparsely of African companies entering the Irish market. A concentrated effort should be made to encourage African business people to use Ireland as a gateway into the wider European market.

Furthermore Irish Aid should attempt to employ a whole government approach to make it easier for African Business people to explore the options which Ireland has to offer. This includes making it easier for Africans to get the necessary visas to enter the country. Ireland also has the potential to act as a mediator between the interests of African countries and the European Union at World Trade Organisation

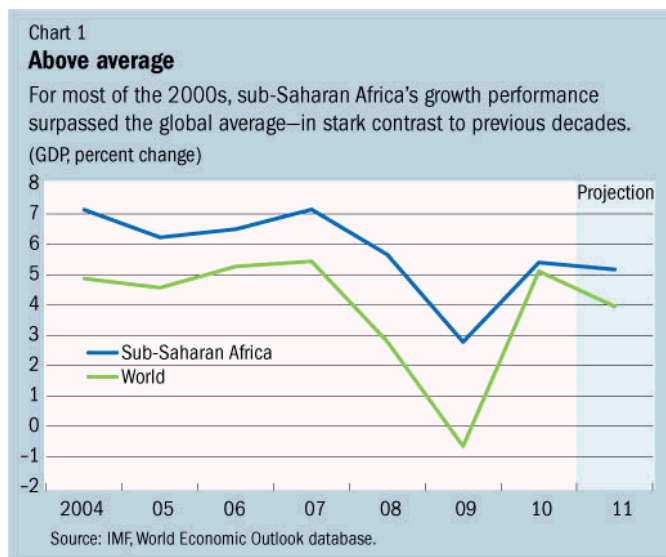
² Evidence and opportunity, Irelands trade relationship with its development program countries in Africa. Sourced at: http://www.valueaddedinafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/VAA_report_web.pdf

(WTO) negotiations. The Africa Centre suggests that Irish Aid should encourage Irish delegates at trade talks and conferences to represent views which would be beneficial to African countries.

Recent business research indicates a growing interest in Africa as an emerging market. The Harvard Business Review 2011 cites the potential of African economies:

“Africa offers a higher return on investment than any other emerging market. For several reasons: Competition is less intense and few foreign companies have a presence there, and pent up consumer demand is strong. Companies that desire revenues and profits, we believe, can no longer ignore Africa...as Africa’s economies progress, opportunities are opening in sectors such as retailing, telecommunications, banking, infrastructure-related industries, resource-related businesses, and all along the agriculture value chain”. (Chironga Leke et al 2011)³

The importance and value of the emerging African markets and economies is now beyond doubt and economic growth in Africa may in the coming years exceed the growth and value of some of the BRIC economies (ibid). The IMF records a growth rate for sub-Saharan Africa that surpassed the global average for most of the last decade and projects an increasing growth rate for sub-Saharan African economies (see chart below).



Even though Africa is experiencing economic growth, the Africa Centre wants Irish businesses to engage with African countries on a level playing field.

Ireland’s interaction with the African Union is greatly welcomed however perhaps it would be more advantageous for Ireland to engage with African countries on a

³ *Cracking the Next Growth Market: Africa* – Chironga, M. Leke, A. Lund, S. van Wamelen, A (May 2011) Harvard Business Review

country to country level in order to promote a relationship of equality. Irish Aid should also aim to work with both African countries and their European partners to try and halt the loss of revenue experienced by African countries due to tax evasion.

2.5 Ways of Working

2.5.1 Trade and Development

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade recently introduced their new strategy: Ireland and Africa: Our Partnership with a Changing Continent (DFA & Trade 2011)⁴

The Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Eamon Gilmore TD stated in his introduction to the new strategy states:

“The time is now ripe for us to turn a new page in our relationship with Africa, and in doing so to recognise the way in which African countries have progressed and matured and how our approach to African countries must, in the same way, progress and mature. The strategy recognises that as Africa’s economy grows it will need solutions and goods and services that it cannot produce itself, that demand for goods and services is growing from African countries and that Irish-based companies are well-placed to play a greater role in Africa.” (ibid 2011:3)

The strategy outlined in the strategy document seeks to create new investment and trade links with African countries building on our strong existing relationships.

However, Africa Centre feels that, this trade links should be base on equal relationship, not only promoting trade for Irish businesses to African countries, but also paving ways for African businesses to enter into Irish and European markets. Irish Aid needs to make sure in building the relationship Irish businesses comply to **corporate responsibility** of investing in Africa and be **tax compliant**. This should be the case also for Irish NGOs, whose **migrant workers in African countries are not tax compliant**. NGO workers **should pay their tax liabilities to African Governments** (as we speak, we don’t know of any Irish NGO, whose migrant workers in African countries are paying tax on their income).

2.5.2 Use of Images and Messages

Progressing and maintaining human dignity is central to all the aims of the Irish Aid White Paper however it is important that dignity should be respected in all areas of

⁴ Ireland and Africa: Our Partnership with a Changing Continent. An African Strategy for the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.(Sept 2011)

aid. It is essential that the images which NGOs and government bodies release to the media and use in fundraising campaigns are accurate and non-exploitative. Many members of the public rely solely on such media and fundraising releases to inform them about issues on the African continent. It is therefore essential that they are presented with accurate imagery so they can form fair and unbiased opinions. Images should comply at all times with the DOCHAS Code of Conduct. Therefore they should show aid recipients' in a light that enhances not detracts from their dignity as human beings.

Irish Aid should work to ensure that all NGOs receiving Irish Aid funding are aware of and comply with the Code of Conduct. Furthermore Irish Aid should integrate the Code of Conduct into their own policy framework in a manner that is binding so that NGOs who do not comply with its standards can be held accountable. The text which accompanies images should place them in context and contain information that is both accurate and informative; images should not be allowed stand alone without and contextual information.

Irish Aid should ensure that the images which NGOs use have been taken with the consent of the people shown and that they are aware that their image will be used for the purpose of fundraising or highlighting a campaign. It is crucial that NGOs that work to secure the dignity of the population of a country also respects this dignity to the highest degree. Irish Aid should also remember that the image of African countries that is presented to the Irish public by NGO fundraising greatly influences the way that they see African communities living here in Ireland. The presentation of stereotypical images can influence people to react to African communities in a racist or insulting manner. Thus complying with the Dochas Code of Conduct will enhance the dignity of African's who live and work in Ireland.

2.5.3 Conflict Resolution

Ireland has an admirable international reputation in the area of peacekeeping and conflict resolution which has been born out of our unique history, especially looking at the Good Friday Agreement of 1998. The establishment of the Conflict Resolution Unit has been a positive step in sharing our experience with other countries who are struggling to find peace. While acknowledging that every conflict is essentially different and can be attributed to a variety of diverse causes Irish Aid should continue to work with countries in the midst and emerging from conflict and share our Irish experiences with them; this in an area which would benefit from Irish Aid investing time and resources in the coming years.

2.5.4 Africa Liberation Day

The 2006 Irish Aid White Paper stated that Irish Aid would hold an annual day to celebrate African Culture and to raise awareness of African issues. This day was to be called ***Africa Day*** and was to be held annually on the 25th of May. To date this day has been held with much success in the major cities of Ireland. The Africa Centre suggests that Africa Day be renamed ***Africa Liberation Day*** in order to give

it its original name and present it to the Irish public in its intended nature. The Africa Centre also suggests that Irish Aid allow the Various African Diaspora groups to come together in order to organise a day that would be both entertaining and informative to everyone within the community. The Africa Centre would be prepared to take the lead role in bringing together these various groups to not only celebrate African Liberation Day but to educate Irish communities on the potential which Africa holds for them. By supporting and strengthening these groups African Liberation Day would receive a new lease of life. It is crucial that members of the media are informed of the events that take place on African Liberation Day and that they have access to accurate and relevant information surrounding the events and African culture in general.

The text of the 2006 White Paper Document is lengthy and at times it is quite wordy and confusing. It would be of great benefit to the Irish public if a simplified version was made available so that the information contained in the document is easily accessible for all. It is also important that there is greater awareness among the Irish public that a document such as the Irish Aid White Paper exists. If Irish Aid wishes to have the continued support of the tax payer in funding aid the tax payer should be aware of the policies on which aid is carried out. As previously mentioned it would be greatly beneficial for Irish Aid to work with African Diaspora groups within Ireland to help them form and reform policy that related to aid. It is also important that Irish Aid puts an increased emphasis on sustainable aid which includes an exit strategy.

2.6 Other comments

2.6.1 Current context of development among the population in Ireland

A recent Eurobarometer⁵ illustrated that 85% of Irish people consider it important (41%) or fairly important (44%) to continue to provide aid to developing countries. However the number of those who considered it is important in 2010 has dropped by 10%. This drop may be attributed to the current economic climate. Furthermore a recent Seminar organised by Dóchas DEG in 2011 '*Added Values: Promoting Long Term Public Engagement in Development*' was privileged to have Mr. Martin Kirk of Oxfam as Keynote Speaker. Mr Kirk was a co-author of a prominent Research released in the UK '*Finding Frames – New ways to engage the UK public in global poverty*'. He explained that despite 20 years of events such as Make Poverty History (MPH), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Make Trade Fair, recent research described the British public as uninterested and uninformed about global poverty. The public's understanding of the causes and solutions to poverty is stuck in the "Live Aid Legacy" from 1985. MPH's such as 'the politics of poverty' did not penetrate the public's psyche. He argued that in using many of the same methods as used in 1985, MPH threw people back to the Live Aid way of thinking. It undermined

⁵ **Development aid: Eurobarometer survey shows drop in Irish support**

http://ec.europa.eu/ireland/press_office/news_of_the_day/eurobarometer-development-aid_en.htm

the justice frame and reinforced the idea of the West as the powerful giver. Over last ten years NGOs constructed the 'protest business' model for engaging the public. This is based on high numbers, low value participation that tells people what to do. It has been successful for fundraising and for easy campaign asks. However the collateral damage is that we now have supporters who don't understand the problem.

The Africa Centre recommends that the current economic problems experienced by people in Ireland are an opportunity for fuller public engagement and analysis of global structures, poverty and inequality. It is necessary that the African and Irish communities strengthen dialogue on creating awareness and combating global injustices through education. Africans living in Ireland in their own right have experienced many global injustices and this needs to be reflected in the development debates and discussions in Ireland to have a balanced multiple African perspectives. The inclusion of diverse perspectives on development from the Global South is a key element for effective development education practices in both the formal and non-formal education sectors as outlined in Irish Aid Development Education strategy (2007 – 2011:7&17, extension to 2015). This can be strengthened by African Diaspora participation on the Development Education Advisory Committee.

2.6.2 Areas that require strengthening in order to broaden and deepen understanding in Ireland of issues facing African Countries

The Africa Centre acknowledges the achievement that applicants to the Irish Aid Civil Society Fund must be signatories to the Code of Conduct on Images and Messages and it's also mentioned on the Development Education one year funding application.

The Africa Centre recommends that implementation of the Code of Conduct be further strengthened by a willingness to promote it beyond NGO's and into the media when reporting on development related issues in the media. We are hopeful that this will encourage the organisations to communicate their programmes and values in a coherent and balanced way.

2.6.3 Regular development debates in the Dáil and in the Seanad

The Africa Centre recognises that there is interest among government members to uphold its commitment to ODA and highlight its importance to the public. Recent participation of a cross-party group of Deputies and Senators joined Dóchas in its campaign to ensure that Ireland meets its commitment in respect of the Millennium Development Goals to reach the target of 0.7% of GDP for official development assistance by 2015.

The Africa Centre recommends to further strengthen cross party commitment any policies across other Government departments which undermine the Government's

development goals be identified so that such policies can be amended to minimise negative effects on the poor

2.6.4 Africa Strategy 2011

Ireland and Africa: Our Partnership with a Changing Continent (DFA & Trade 2011)⁶

The strategy outlined seeks to create new investment and trade links with African countries building on our strong existing relationships.

The Africa Centre recommends that this strategy be incorporated into the White Paper as an important means of raising awareness of the importance of trade as a vehicle for promoting economic growth and development in poorer countries and for eradicating poverty (McKinsey 2010)⁷ especially coming from the participation of Africans living in Ireland.

⁶ *Ireland and Africa: Our Partnership with a Changing Continent. An African Strategy for the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.*(Sept 2011)

⁷ *Lions on the Move: The Progress and Potential of African Economies* – McKinsey & Company 2010