



Bishops' Appeal Submission to the Irish Aid White Paper Review

As the official representative of the Church of Ireland in the realm of aid and development for the last forty years, Bishops' Appeal welcomes this opportunity to respond to the White Paper Review.

Bishops Appeal is the Church of Ireland World Aid and Development Programme. On behalf of the Church of Ireland throughout the island of Ireland we fund educational, health and rural development projects and appeal for funds for disaster relief response. We partner with faith based organisations, NGOs and communities in the developing world to deliver excellent sustainable programmes. Through the Bishops' Appeal, the Church of Ireland has responded in impressive quantities to disasters such as those in Haiti, Niger and the Horn of Africa.

Since 2006 Bishops' Appeal has been guided by the White Paper in its understanding of good development cooperation. We see aid as being beneficial when it exists as one part of a bigger picture and as such, a support to holistic approaches by communities and societies to lift themselves out of poverty. We have also complimented government approaches in the areas which we target and identify as priority. As such we have mainstreamed gender equality throughout all our funding allocations and have emphasised water projects, educational projects and HIV/AIDS projects as themed focuses for the Church in recent years.

In brief our main comments are as follows:

- The definition of development must emphasise more aspects than aid. The White Paper does place aid in the confines of a wider and more holistic approach to development but moving forward this must be stressed. Aid fails where partnership and community initiative are not present. The crucial role of the recipient in making aid a sustainable success must be emphasised.
- As such development cooperation should become more prominent than that of the concept of aid. Understandably it is a more complex concept than simply giving but in terms of our obligation to educate the people of Ireland and to promote positive



images of the developing world, development cooperation as a reality and as an educational tool for positive reinforcement of images and messages is preferable and should now become the focal point.

- Quality and quantity as indicators of success need to be re-evaluated. It has been important that Ireland use the Millennium Development Goals as indicators. Now, particularly as the scale of our giving may be reassessed within the current climate, the emphasis on quality over quantity must receive more clout. This potentially will shift the emphasis from economic outputs and statistics to the wellbeing, quality of life and human flourishing which should be at the heart of every Government Policy on development and aid. Does the increase of the number of children in a classroom matter more than the quality of education that those children are receiving? The New Economics Foundation emphasises a country's ecological footprint and its people's wellbeing as indicators of economic growth. Although it is more difficult to measure, wellbeing and flourishing are encouraged as qualitative indicators. The Church believes that a holistic approach of physical, emotional, economic and spiritual wellbeing should all be recognised as needed elements in development.
- Bishops' Appeal would like to see increased acknowledgement of the role of faith based organisations within the arena of poverty alleviation and the distribution of aid. The Government already works with faith based agencies and is aware of the often unrecognised yet phenomenal work that they achieve on the ground. With a holistic approach and a remit that extends beyond helping those within the same boundaries of faith, they are of far more significance in the developing world than is often currently being acknowledged. Bishops' Appeal strongly urges the Government not only to continue to recognise the work but to increase the visibility and indeed the reality of the work and the existing partnership that the Government has with faith based organisations.
- Bishops' Appeal urges the recognition of the role of the Church in many communities in the developing world for their good governance and the implementation of projects as well as distribution of aid to where it is most needed. In the Anglican Communion alone, the work of the Anglican Church in the communities where it is based has been instrumental in empowering people to lift themselves out of poverty. Its work has extended beyond those in its own congregations to reach the most marginalised. Further cooperation with the Church in developing countries, as a body of good



governance and solid leadership where the voice of the community and its needs can be heard and responded to, is advised.¹

- The voice of the excluded, the marginalized and the forgotten must be more audible after the review. As the White Paper promotes listening to the main actors in the fight against poverty, the Church of Ireland would encourage the review to include some of these voices to whom we are supposed to be listening and then supporting and facilitating them in their efforts. Too many stories of aid failures have resulted from our inability to listen.
- We encourage the maintenance of gender equality as mainstreamed throughout all Government policies and project delivery. We ask that the Government assess if they have been successful in the delivery of this promise and to put structures in place to ensure its successful implementation in the future. Within the arena of gender equality we ask the Government to continue recognising education as a key and primary vehicle by which women who are marginalised can become the agents of their own transformation.
- Bishops' Appeal concurs with Dochas that there should be an explicitly rights based approach to development cooperation and Irish action to end poverty. The review should be in compliance with Ireland's obligations under human rights law and should set out the mechanisms for integrating these rights into the planning, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of aid programmes and into all areas of Government policy which impact on development and international cooperation.
- Perhaps concepts from the developing world that would enhance our understanding of our Global Citizenship and global obligations should be incorporated into the review. For example, in Southern Africa there is a philosophy known as Ubuntu. This means 'I am who I am because you are who you are'. It implies that when one suffers, we
- all suffer. It emphasises our interdependence. Certainly, as the White Paper suggests, it is not merely because of globalisation but because of our shared humanity that we have an obligation to respond. Perhaps this interdependence and our need of the developing world and our dependence in so many ways on this Two-Thirds World should be highlighted alongside our common humanity.

¹ As with all governance and leadership bodies, the Church here is being advocated on a diocese by diocese basis, based on its track record and not with blanket approval. Corruption can exist in all areas of society, but where there is an opportunity to work alongside the Church in its implementation of projects, the Government should consider it as a legitimate partner, particularly as it holds so much sway in communities in the developing world.



- Ireland has been in a time of economic transition since 2006. The impact that the economic downturn may have on our capacity to give and on the general view of the public as to where taxpayer's money should be allocated must not be underestimated. Bishops' Appeal has noted that much of the donor fatigue has had less to do with economic constraints and more to do with the lack of visible feedback as to where funds are being utilised. Indeed much of the Irish people's commitment to the plight of the poor remains intact. More emphasis on transparency in reporting back, honesty about difficult or failed projects and strategies for minimising 'bad' aid in the future would be advised. As a donor body, when Bishops' Appeal has shown projects that didn't work and explained why they didn't work, people have responded more positively to future proposals. Development is a process and a learning journey for the donor countries as much as for the recipient countries. People are hearing about 'Black Holes' into which aid is vanishing. By addressing this in our resolve to move forward, we can do so with increased transparency and accountability.

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