



Response to the Review of the White Paper on Irish Aid

A. Response:

Introduction: Described by former Minister of State for Overseas Development, Peter Power, as ‘a hive of development activity’, Mary Immaculate College (MIC) has for many years been actively engaged in international development through Development Cooperation Ireland (DCI), the UbuntuNet Alliance, the Zambia-Ireland Teacher Education Partnership (ZITEP) and the Development and Intercultural Education Project (DICE). MIC also acts as the institutional host of the Centre for Global Development through Education (CGDE), which was established in 2008. Since its inception under the Programme of Strategic Cooperation between Irish Aid and Higher Education and Research Institutes, CGDE has sought to contribute to poverty reduction by enhancing the quality of teaching, learning and educational research through capacity building in teacher education in Africa. Furthermore, in 1996 MIC created the Alternative Education Experience Africa (AEEA) which provides students with the opportunity to work in African schools on self-funded placements. Additionally, MIC also hosts the DICE programme lecturer and is a partner in other Irish Aid-funded initiatives such as the Irish-African Partnership for Research Capacity Building (IAPRCB) and the Combat Diseases of Poverty Consortium. Furthermore, MIC offers a Graduate Certificate/Graduate Diploma course leading to an award in Master in Education (Development Education) which is the first Masters in Development Education to be offered in Ireland.

Progress Made:

i. Has the Government been successful in implementing the commitments

contained in the White Paper on Irish Aid?

The White Paper on Irish Aid (2006) outlined that the principal focus of the government's support for education in low-income developing countries, particularly in Irish Aid programme countries, will remain the provision of high-quality primary education, situated within comprehensive national education plans (Government of Ireland, 2006: 44). While great progress has been made since the turn of the century in advancing towards the second Millennium Development Goal of ensuring that all boys and girls complete primary school, grave problems remain in the attainment of such an aspiration. The progress that has been made in this arena must also be contextualised within several highly significant mitigating factors. For example, Tanzania's movement towards universal primary education has been partly predicated upon the government decision to abolish primary school tuition fees in 2002 and to make school enrolment compulsory for all children between 7 and 13 years of age. The consequent leap in enrolment levels, from 59 per cent in 2000 to an official figure of 95.4 per cent¹ ten years later, has led to attendant problems such as shortages of books, teachers and toilets, as well as overcrowded classrooms - a difficulty which is evidenced by the increase in the national pupil-teacher ratio from 41 to 1 in 2000, to 51 to 1 in 2010. Ultimately, in the rush to high enrolment levels prior to 2015, quality of education has been weakened thereby diminishing what has otherwise been a very impressive achievement. The tendency to, at least temporarily, trade off quality of education for high enrolment levels is also manifest in other Irish Aid programme countries that have made attendance compulsory for primary school pupils, such as Lesotho and Uganda. Therefore, while great progress has been made in regard to primary school enrolment levels, such figures obscure deep problems with regard to the provision of quality education in many low-income countries and much remains to be achieved in this critical area of development.

Changing context:

ii. 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

¹ Joseph Kisanji, director of the Tanzania Education Network (2009) has put the true figure of primary school enrolment at 77 per cent.

priorities?

The former US president, Richard Nixon, once stated that 'there are no votes in aid'. While public support for Ireland's programme of overseas development assistance (ODA) remains high (according to various MRBI polls conducted since the onset of the financial crisis), cutting the aid programme is unlikely to lose any governing party a large tranche of sectional and/or influential voters. Nixon's maxim has recently manifested itself in the swingeing cuts to the Irish Aid budget since the initial onslaught of the global financial crisis in 2008. It is obvious that the rapid deterioration in the nation's finances would have catastrophic implications for all sections of society. Nevertheless, the decisions taken to impose cuts of almost one third in Ireland's overseas development assistance programme has been particularly severe.

As noted in its 2009 Peer Review of Ireland, the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) emphasised that Ireland is a 'champion at making aid more effective', that our programme of ODA is highly innovative and that the programme aims to address the causes as well as the symptoms of crises. Consequently, Ireland's ODA is held in very high esteem both nationally and internationally. However, because of its vulnerability to political and financial expediency, it is almost certain that Ireland's ODA programme will be continuously targeted for reductions in its annual budget up to and including 2015. Amidst such retrenchment, it is important that cuts to Ireland's ODA programme do not translate into Irish Aid diverting its focus from the importance of education, and the concomitant emphasis on quality, as the primary vehicle for lifting the economically and socially marginalised out of poverty. Cuts to educational programmes could have potentially destabilising consequences in terms of cross-cutting issues such as hunger, gender equality, and reductions in the contraction of diseases such as HIV/AIDS. The importance of education as a significant component of the fight against endemic poverty and latterly in the realisation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) has long been recognised.

The World Bank, for example, in 1995 stated that: 'Education-especially basic education (primary and lower-secondary)-helps reduce poverty by increasing the productivity of the poor, by reducing fertility and improving health, and by equipping people with the skills they need to participate fully in economy and society' (World Bank, 1995:1).² Similarly, Servaas van der Berg (2008) of Stellenbosch University undertook a study on behalf of UNESCO which found that education can reduce poverty in numerous ways. For example, educated people are more likely to get jobs, be more productive and have higher earnings. The education of girls, in particular, brings social benefits such as improved health care of children, lower fertility and greater participation in the workforce. Furthermore, quality-adjusted education will improve a country's economic growth, which in turn should generate economic opportunities and incomes (van der Berg, 2008).³ A further study on the correlation between education and poverty reduction undertaken by Gundlach, de Navarro and Weisert (2004) found that more quality-adjusted education increases the income of poor people in addition to the positive effect on overall average income. They recommend that effective education policies be an essential component of any poverty-reduction strategy (Gundlach et al, 2004).⁴ Therefore, we believe that a continuing strong budgetary commitment to improving not only educational access, but also the quality of education in Irish Aid partner countries, will have long-term, sustainable and tangible benefits in the fight against poverty.

Key Issues:

iii. *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?*

Hunger, poverty and disease are more likely to occur in societies with weak institutions and governance structures. In order to ameliorate some of the most egregious policies and structural problems facing numerous low-income developing

² World Bank, 1995. *Priorities and Strategies for Education: A World Bank Review*, Washington DC: World Bank.

³ Van der Berg, S., 2008. *Poverty and education. UNESCO Education policy series*, Paris: International Institution for Educational Planning.

⁴ Gundlach, E., J. Navarro de Pablo, and N. Weisert, 2004. 'Education is Good for the Poor: A Note on Dollar and Kraay', in: Shorrocks, A. and R. van der Hoeven, (eds), *Growth, Inequality, and Poverty*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 92-106,

countries , the Irish government can lend its weight at an international level in calling for a more permissive regime for this category of developing countries regarding the use of selective protectionism in trade policy, the regulation of foreign investment, and in the policy conditions attached to aid from developed countries and loans from international financial organisations. It will be virtually impossible for many low-income developing countries to attain relatively analogous standards of livelihood to rich countries unless they are permitted to implement policies and institutions that were used by all developed economies, from the United States to South Korea, to attain their material prosperity. Without economic development, strong political and social institutions cannot flourish. Irish government interventions at a micro level to address the key issues of hunger, fragility, climate change, basic needs, governance, human rights and gender equality need to be conducted with this overarching macro goal at their forefront. Structural impediments to economic development have in the past been overcome by the use of policies which championed “infant” industries, allowed for the judicious use of protectionism, and were accompanied by improved technologies, a high degree of organisational skill, and enhanced political institutions, all of which advance productive investment and boost basic needs. The Irish government can articulate the need, through its membership of organisations such as the United Nations and the European Union, for a more strategic and policy-driven approach to development internationally if the global scandals of hunger and poor educational quality are to be seriously addressed.

iv. *Given the limited resources and the need to focus these, which issues should the Government prioritise in its future aid programming?*

We believe that intrinsic to all of the above issues (hunger, fragility, climate change, basic needs, governance and human rights, and gender equality) is the need to improve quality of education as a primary catalyst for development. For example, the impact of quality education is evidenced by its role in reducing the attritional levels of HIV/AIDS that prevail in parts of sub-Saharan Africa. A USAID survey found that

good quality education is one of the key defences against the disease (USAID, 2007).⁵ Better education levels not only increase awareness and knowledge of HIV/AIDS, but also lead to higher rates of contraceptive use and greater communication on prevention among partners. Poor quality of education, on the other hand, is one of the contributory factors to ignorance about the disease and also accounts for the early withdrawal of so many children from school in most countries of sub-Saharan Africa (Shabani, 2005).⁶ As highlighted in the *White Paper on Irish Aid* (2006) the achievement of the higher enrolment rates that have been witnessed will be devalued if the quality of education is poor, if teachers are not properly trained, if the curriculum is not developed, and if pupils are not tested regularly for progress (Government of Ireland, 2006).⁷ We believe that there is a pressing need to ameliorate quality of education levels so that tangible gains can be derived from the prevailing high enrolment rates in many low-income developing countries and that the Government should prioritise the issue of quality education in future aid programming.

Quality of education encompasses a dual process, the first component of which identifies the learner's cognitive development as the overarching explicit objective of the education system. Correspondingly, the success with which education systems help students attain cognitive and non-cognitive skills is an indicator of their quality. The second component of quality education concerns the extent to which children's' education translates into nurturing creative and emotional development as well as promoting values of responsible citizenship which lead to a range of personal, social and developmental benefits (see also UNESCO, 2005).⁸ In her work on multi-grade teaching, Catherine Mulryan-Kyne (2007: 503)⁹ highlights how quality of teaching

⁵ USAID, 2007. *Gender, Education and HIV/AIDS*, EQUATE Technical Brief.

⁶ Shabani, J. (2005) 'Quality Education for All and Lifelong Learning in Africa: The role of teacher training institutions' in UNESCO: Capacity Building, UNESCO, Institute for Statistics (2006) *Teachers and Educational Quality: Monitoring Global Needs For 2015*, Montreal: UNESCO Institute for Statistics

⁷ Government of Ireland, 2006. *White Paper on Irish Aid*.

⁸ UNESCO, 2005. *EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2005*.

⁹ Mulryan-Kyne, C. (2007). 'The preparation of teachers for multigrade teaching'. in *Teaching and Teacher Education*, Vol. 23, No. 4, pp. 501-14.

rather than grade configuration or class composition is the most powerful determinant of the quality of pupil learning.

We believe that one of the best methods to deliver qualitative improvements in pupil learning is to enhance the professional development of teachers, head teachers, teacher educators and inspectors. The catalysing role of teachers in bringing about qualitative improvements in learning is also recognised in the *Primary Education Development Plan: 2002-2006 of Tanzania* which puts a priority on the continuing professional development (CPD) of teachers, head teachers, teacher educators and inspectors as the best mechanism for arriving at the goal of qualitative improvement in learning (Government of Tanzania, 2001).¹⁰

Research undertaken within MIC and emanating from several projects undertaken in Uganda and Lesotho by the Centre for Global Development through Education (CGDE), also identified the need for the establishment of a series of CPD programmes for teachers, school principals and those holding key leadership positions within national educational systems as one of the most effective devices for improving overall quality of education levels in both countries. We believe that the establishment of such a series of CPD programmes under the leadership of the respective Ministries of Education and the Teacher Education Colleges would provide lasting teaching and learning skills in classroom settings and an Africa-based community of practice that would enhance the quality of educational provision in primary schools. The development of the series of CPD programmes that we envisage would involve the engagement of all stakeholders in the improvement of educational quality such as the respective Ministries of Education, Teacher Education Colleges, Head Teachers or Principals, classroom teachers, as well as partner higher education institutes in Ireland.

The impact of such a programme would be a better educated population of young people with improved prospects for further education and enhanced employment aspirations. This is especially important for students from poorer backgrounds and

¹⁰ Government of Tanzania, 2001. *Primary Education Development Plan: 2002-2006*.

those who have limited resources and possibilities for self-advancement. The benefits of CPD in building capacity for school leadership in a systematic and sustainable manner are particularly evident in education systems with a small number of resources available to teachers. Few senior staff members in such under-resourced education systems can be categorised as well-trained professionals because they are often male classroom teachers who have been promoted towards the end of their teaching careers based on the criteria of seniority and gender rather than professional development (UNESCO, 2005: 175).¹¹ Head Teachers and Deputy Head Teachers need intensive CPD in order to enable them to support and mentor other teachers in critical areas of education such as formative assessment, differentiation, thematic curriculum, special education needs (SEN) and teaching in large group settings, which are so often prevalent in low-income developing countries. An important marker of success should be retention of students for longer in school through enhanced engagement and resultant gains in critical learning (e.g. literacy and numeracy).

Such a series of CPD programmes would also be commensurate with the education sector strategic objectives outlined by two of Irish Aid's partner countries, namely Uganda and Lesotho. The Kingdom of Lesotho's *Poverty Reduction Strategy* (2004), for example, underlines the importance of reducing the relatively high drop-out rates that prevail in primary schools by stressing the need to 'improve quality in the first three to four years of primary schooling' (Government of Lesotho, 2004: 77).¹² In order to attain this objective the Basotho government 'has placed considerable value on in-service training as an important aspect of teachers' continuing professional development' (MoET, 2005: 96).¹³ The Basotho government also recognizes that without sufficient, qualified and well-motivated teachers, most of the targets outlined in its *Education Sector Strategic Plan* would be very difficult to achieve. It emphasises therefore, 'an even higher need for continuing professional development to re-skill teachers on innovative pedagogic approaches' (ibid, 2005: 95) in order to

¹¹ UNESCO, 2005. 'EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2005'. *Education for All: The Quality Imperative*

¹² Government of Lesotho, 2004. *Kingdom of Lesotho, Poverty Reduction Strategy: 2004/5-2006/7*.

¹³ 2005, MOET, *Lesotho Education Sector Strategic Plan: 2005-2015*

help redress the problems of teacher shortages and subsequent high teacher turnover.

Similarly, the *Education Sector Strategic Plan: 2010-2015*¹⁴ of the Ugandan Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) highlights a number of systemic difficulties that have plagued the education sector since Ugandan independence in 1962 and which have resulted in 'limited professional development opportunities in leadership and management for head teachers' (MoES, 2010: 24). Among the MoES priority areas identified under the Strategic Plan is 'Quality and Relevance of Education'. One of the foremost strategies recognised as enhancing both the quality and relevance of education is the strengthening of primary teacher colleges 'so they supply sufficient adequately prepared teachers' (ibid, 2010: 10). Additionally, the Strategic Plan underlines the importance of enhanced instructional quality in broadening pupils' achievement of literacy, numeracy and basic life skills. Among the vectors of enhanced instructional quality outlined in the Plan included improving pupil assessment and the 'need for improved opportunity for professional development, management skills training and implementation of performance monitoring systems among teacher educators and Primary Teaching Colleges (PTC) managers'(ibid, 2010: 45).

Overall, we believe that such a series of CPD programmes for teachers, school principals and those holding key leadership positions within national educational systems would not only build capacity within individuals but could also be integrated into an institutional plan wherein a model of intervention could be developed to be disseminated and replicated as a model of best practice in other educational settings and political jurisdictions. Targeting CPD as an area to enhance quality of education would leave a long-lasting legacy in terms of capacity building, enhancing economic development and maintaining and improving collaborative partnerships with educational institutions based in the global South.

Ways of Working:

¹⁴ Government of Uganda, Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), 2010. *Appraisal Report: Updated Education Sector Strategic Plan 2010-2015*

v. *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?*

In his book *The White Man's Burden* (2006), former World Bank economist, William Easterly asserted that 'Aid won't make poverty history...Only the self-reliant efforts of poor people and poor societies themselves can end poverty, borrowing ideas and institutions from the West when it suits them to do so' (Easterly, 2006: 334).¹⁵ Aid, nevertheless, still has an important, and at times life-saving, role to play in development as evidenced by its function in the (virtual) eradication of lethal diseases such as guinea worm and smallpox. However, the ultimate purpose of any Government aid agency with a remit to foster development within low-income countries should be to make itself redundant in the long-term. One of the barriers created to development is the perception that structural impediments such as climate, natural resources (the "resource curse"), geographical location, bad political leadership, and ethnic diversity are unalterable and virtually impossible to overcome. Such an interpretation not only neglects the fact that those aforementioned barriers to development can be overcome with better technologies, superior organisational skills and more effective political institutions, but also ignores the historical fact that virtually all countries that have attained developed country status had to overcome at least one of those impediments on their respective roads to development. A cursory reading of a work such as Tom Garvin's *News from a New Republic: Ireland in the 1950s* (2010)¹⁶ highlights how Ireland, up to relatively recently, was a poor, underdeveloped state derided by one American scientist, Dr D.M.Gates, in 1956 as 'an over-populated, tragically poor agricultural country with a total lack of organisation for research' (cited in Garvin, 2010: 188). This depiction of Ireland serves to underscore how underdevelopment is not an inevitable or historically determined process. A brief examination of countries that have successfully extricated the majority of their respective populations from chronic poverty in the last fifty years tells us that development can be ameliorated by *inter-alia*, assiduous

¹⁵ Easterly, W., 2006. *The White Man's Burden: Why the West's efforts to aid The Rest have done so much ill and so little good*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

¹⁶ Garvin, T., 2010. *News from a New Republic: Ireland in the 1950s*, Dublin: Gill and Macmillan.

planning, judicious use of technologies and by creating strong social and political institutions which challenge restrictive practices and sectional interests. Instead of condemning low-income countries to perennial underdevelopment it is important to assert that the process of development, while it may ultimately take decades, should be seen as a highly complex outcome of better policy choices, as well as greater global integration and interdependence. Testimony to the economic development taking place within Africa, for example, is that eight economies on that continent doubled in size between 2000 and 2009.

In the short-to-medium-term, the Irish government can further strengthen its ways of working in delivering an effective aid programme and bring about further results in poverty reduction by pursuing a more coherent policy approach to development. As outlined by Barry, King and Matthews (2009)¹⁷, PCD is achieved when policies across a range of issues support, or at the very least do not undermine, the attainment of development objectives and when policies that affect low-income developing countries are coordinated, complementary and non-contradictory. The aspiration to achieve policy coherence for development (PCD) was highlighted in the White Paper on Development Policy (2006). While the establishment of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Development (IDCD) was very welcome in this regard, the catastrophic collapse in the nation's public finances since 2008 and the concomitant banking crisis has meant that PCD has not been pursued as assiduously as was hitherto the case. A greater commitment to PCD on behalf of the Irish government, involving policy consistency, policy mitigation, policy enhancement and consistency in advocacy within international fora can contribute to poverty reduction by eliminating inconsistencies between aid and non-aid policies and using Ireland's voice to put forward consistent pro-development positions at international fora (see 'Key Issues iii' above). Policy making always involves balancing competing interests. Enunciating policies which can be portrayed as inimical to domestic,

¹⁷ Barry, F., King, M. and Matthews, A., 2009. *Policy Coherence for Development: The State of Play in Ireland*, Report commissioned by the Advisory Board for Irish Aid, Dublin: The Institute for International Integration Studies.

sectional or indeed national interests can be particularly contentious in the straitened economic circumstances which the Irish state currently endures. Nevertheless, an approach which prioritises policy coherence for development is not a “zero-sum” game with benefits accruing solely to low-income developing countries. Ireland can also benefit from adopting a PCD approach which enhances development, particularly in regard to our trade relations with specified low-income developing countries in areas such as “Aid for Trade”, the governance of international financial institutions, agricultural exports and outward foreign direct investment.

Other comments: