



National Youth Council of Ireland

Response to the Review of the White Paper on Irish Aid

April 2012

2.0 Response

2.1 Background and Introduction

Background

The National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) is the representative body for voluntary youth organisations in Ireland. NYCI functions to represent the interests of young people and youth organisations. NYCI's role is recognised in legislation (Youth Work Act) and as a social partner. The NYCI aims through its member organisations and its representative role to empower young people to participate in society as fulfilled confident individuals. The work of the Youth Council is based on principles of equality, social justice and equal participation for all. In achieving these aims the NYCI seeks the emergence of a society in which young people are valued citizens who can make a meaningful contribution to their community.

Introduction

NYCI welcomes the opportunity to make a submission as part of the Irish Aid review process. NYCI's Development Education Programme (NYDEP) organised a seminar in February 2012 on 'Making the Case for Development Education in Youth Work', at which Minister Costello looked forward to a youth sector response to the White Paper review process. Given that Minister Costello opened the event with a key-note speech in which he addressed the process and importance of the public consultation, it was on the minds of all present and came up during many of the discussions¹. As a concrete first step towards a public consultation, NYDEP consulted with its Youth Advisory Group, which consists of young people aged 16-20 who represent youth organisations around Ireland. Their input is

¹ A full report of the event 'Making the Case for Development Education in Youth Work' is available here: http://www.youthdeved.ie/development_education/makingthecase

recorded in the annex to this submission. In addition, NYDEP's Advisory Group established a task group to draft the submission. Participants at the February seminar were also invited to contribute to the development of the NYCI submission.

The submission focuses on a number of key issues and makes recommendations to advance the objectives of the work. The submission outlines our views on the following:

- The values and principles underpinning Irish Aid's work
- The importance of focusing on youth/young people in Irish Aid's programmes
- The importance of consultation with young people around issues that affect them
- Recognition of the role of youth work for achieving key targets
- Continued and strengthened support for development education in Ireland in both non-formal and formal education sectors
- The need to address the issue of youth unemployment
- Recognition and support for volunteering
- The promotion the contribution of the business sector to development
- A whole Government approach to development policy and for coherence at a policy level
- Reaching the UN target on overseas aid

2.2 Progress Made

NYCI welcomes the progress made by Government in implementing the commitments in the White Paper. Like Dóchas, we support the White Paper's focus on poverty eradication, human rights, partnership with civil society and recognition of the need for a whole government approach to development. NYCI believes that priorities such as hunger, fragility, climate change, meeting basic needs, governance, human rights, and gender equality should be retained for Ireland's development cooperation programme. Such priorities cannot be dealt with in isolation, particularly in the current context of international development. They require a cross cutting and synergetic policy approach to ensure they are addressed appropriately.

NYCI asserts that youth/young people need to be explicitly prioritised in Irish Aid's programmes, as they are especially vulnerable to falling into poverty. We

agree with the Irish Development Education Association (IDEA) that there have been key successes in the area of development education arising out of the commitment in the White Paper, that "every person in Ireland will have access to educational opportunities to understand their rights and responsibilities as global citizens as well as their potential to affect change for a more just and equal world." (White Paper on Irish Aid, 2006).. This was acknowledged by Irish Aid in the synthesis paper (2011) that "overall Irish Aid's investment and support has led to some important strengths in the integration of development education across both the formal and non-formal sectors" (Synthesis paper, page 6). Specifically in the youth sector, the review recognises that "there has been an

increase in the number of key youth organisations recognising the relevance and value of development education within their agendas, structures and programmes of activity” (Synthesis paper, page 6).

NYCI welcomes the opening of the Irish Aid Volunteering and Information Centre and the openness of the staff to accommodate a wide range of development and development education related activities. The opening of an Irish Aid Information and Volunteering Centre has proved successful not just as a focal point for the public to obtain information but also for youth and community groups to host events, trainings and showcase their work in order to encourage and promote deeper public engagement. The staff at the Centre is very accommodating and supportive during events.

2.3 Changing context

The economic context, both in Ireland and globally, has changed dramatically in recent years and in no sector of the population have these changes been felt more keenly than among young adults and children. Young people in Ireland today have a very different set of prospects in comparison to young adults in 2006. Similarly, young people have played an integral role in bringing about change and highlighting injustice and inequality throughout the world, through protests including the Arab Spring. Children and young adults face the opportunities and challenges of living in a globalised and unequal world daily. **We see children and young adults as having a crucial role to play in learning via development education opportunities and tackling injustice.**

NYDEP agrees with IDEA's analysis of the changing economic outlook that in Ireland, and indeed across Europe, citizens are facing into austerity and becoming more inward looking. This point was reaffirmed in the latest Eurobarometer poll (Europeans and the Future of Development Aid, November 2011) which found that in Ireland, although the support for development cooperation was very high at 85%, within this support there was a 17% drop in the support for development aid from 'very important' to 'fairly important'. This finding presents a big challenge to development educators to 'sell' the message that Ireland is still a wealthy country by international standards and has international responsibilities to tackle poverty and inequality and to make global connections between the current experience in Ireland and the situation of the most vulnerable people, including young people, in the poorest countries.

Recommendation:

NYCI call on Irish Aid to increase investment in raising public awareness through development education and meaningful public engagement, including volunteering for development.

Unemployment

Unemployment has a negative impact on both mental and physical health. It is associated in particular with high levels of stress, causing unhappiness, loss of self-esteem and depression. The psychological impacts are understood to persist over time while unemployment that is longer in duration is even more likely to produce harmful effects. Furthermore the longer a person is unemployed, the greater the disadvantage they face in trying to find work. Society is also greatly affected by an increase in unemployment and it often gives rise to an increase in social problems and crime (Lending a Hand, NYCI 2011).

Recommendation:

NYCI recommends that Irish Aid considers the impact of youth unemployment in the countries in which it operates and supports initiatives that tackle youth unemployment, including apprenticeships and entrepreneurship programmes.

Climate Change

In its submission to the White Paper, IDEA cites Trócaire's assertion that climate change generally, and climate justice in particular, has shifted from being a development issue to being a key context in which development happens.

Recommendation:

NYCI welcomes the continued focus on climate change as a cross-cutting issue for Irish Aid and, in line with the Stop Climate Chaos submission, urge Irish Aid to ensure that "effective action on climate change is inherently linked to and dependant on a shift in both developed and developing countries to development models which are socially, environmentally and economically sustainable."

Leadership on poverty reduction post-2015

In 2006, the deadline for achieving the Millennium Development Goals was still a long way off. Now as we are getting closer to the deadline, it is clear that some goals are closer to being achieved than others and that certain regions, and countries, have made further progress than others. Overall high levels of poverty and inequality still exist, though there has been a significant shift from lower income countries to middle income countries. It is imperative that a new paradigm of development (post-2015) should incorporate all of the

abovementioned issues. Ireland has the potential to bring great leadership to the development of this paradigm - leadership that is badly needed.

Recommendation:

NYCI recommend that Irish Aid plays an active role in developing a new internationally agreed agenda to combat poverty and inequality and inspire a vision for a world in which children and young adults can reach their full potential and contribute to their communities' and countries' development.

Sustainable transition to a results-focused model

In youth work, as in other areas of formal and non-formal education, the current economic situation has affected a wide range of income streams for youth organisations, which was acknowledged in the synthesis paper as presenting a significant challenge for embedding development education in their work. This has led to an increased focus on results and value for money, which is welcomed by the youth sector but requires a transition time to fully implement.

Recommendation:

NYCI calls on Irish Aid to work closely with the development education sector and youth organisations to facilitate a sustainable transition to a results-focused model of development education. Irish Aid should state clearly what they mean by 'quality' and impact' and continue to work with the wider development education sector to develop clear measurable indicators of progress towards the desired outcomes.

Communication and media

Communication channels are constantly changing. The amount of coverage of international development and global justice issues in traditional media remains relatively low. A Eurobarometer poll in 2009 found that 42% of Europeans felt there was too little coverage of development issues in mainstream media, compared to 8% who felt there was too much (http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_318_en.pdf). While there remain barriers to overcome, a development perspective should be advanced through traditional media channels that goes beyond sound bites to engage Irish citizens in a more meaningful way. Likewise, the use of Facebook, Twitter and other social media sites has altered the way people, particularly children and young people, receive information and how they use it.

Recommendations:

NYCI calls on Irish Aid to continue to push a development perspective through traditional media channels that goes beyond sound bites to engage Irish citizens in a more meaningful way.

NYCI recommends that Irish Aid recognise the role and potential that social media can play in engaging people at home and in programme countries.

2.4 Key Issues

As a member of both Dóchas and IDEA, NYCI has contributed to the submissions of both organisations and agrees fully with their analysis and recommendations. In this submission, we will focus on the following issues:

- Values and principles underpinning Irish Aid's work

NYCI supports the recommendation of both Dóchas and IDEA that **Irish Aid should specify the criteria that underpin its poverty focus. Furthermore, Irish Aid should clearly outline the human rights principles that inform its work, in line with its obligations under international human rights law, including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.**

- Focus on youth/young people in Irish Aid's programmes

According to UNICEF's State of the World's Children 2011, there are 1.2 billion adolescents (young people ages 12-19) across the world, with nine out of ten of these young people living in developing countries. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child recognizes that children have particular rights that need to be protected. Adolescents and young adults are similarly vulnerable to falling into poverty. Millions are denied their basic rights to quality education, health care, protection and exposed to abuse, drugs/alcohol, exploitation or are forced to migrate due to the lack of employment opportunities. **NYCI calls on Irish Aid to explicitly prioritise children and young people, including adolescents, in the White Paper.**

- Consultation with young people around issues that affect them

Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states: *'States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.'* Children and young people are key stakeholders in Irish Aid's work both in Ireland and in its programme countries. **NYCI urges Irish Aid to promote dialogue between young people and decision makers to influence policy-making across all its programmes.** NYDEP also believes that young people have an increasingly important potential and role to play in development education and awareness-raising, not only as target groups of what is 'taught', but as promoters and leaders of development education and awareness-raising in their own right through peer education and leadership. In line with the DARE Forum's position paper² on involving youth and children in development education and awareness-raising, **NYCI calls on Irish Aid to recognise and support the role of non-formal education including youth work to provide young people with the space to learn and critically engage around development and global justice issues.**

The White Paper consultation paper notes that in relation to Irish Aid and the Irish public, the White Paper commits to 'continue to provide support for development education... through informal channels of education'. **NYCI calls on Irish Aid to recognise youth work as 'a planned programme of education designed for the purpose of aiding and enhancing the personal and social development of young people... that is complementary to their formal**

² <http://www.youthdeved.ie/DAREforum#PP>

academic or vocational education and training' (Youth Work Act, 2001) and to reference non-formal rather than informal education in the White Paper.

- Recognition of the role of youth work for achieving key targets

In many developing countries, youth organisations play a critical role in tackling poverty and inequality at a community level. For example, via the NYCI Zambia-Ireland youth worker exchange taking place since 2006, we have worked with Zambian youth organisations who raise awareness about HIV/AIDS and work with street children.

NYCI calls on Irish Aid to recognise and support the important role that youth organisations have in tackling poverty and inequality in its programme countries.

- Development education in both non-formal and formal education sectors

A large majority of Irish people continue to support development cooperation. However, this support cannot be taken for granted. A strong Irish Aid programme requires public ownership, which provides legitimacy for NGOs and the Government to take decisive political actions on poverty and global justice. Public ownership comes about through a deep engagement of people with global justice issues showing how such issues are connected to them. Engaged individuals make a difference through their daily actions as consumers, campaigners, volunteers and educators. Likewise, an engaged public opens a space for dialogue on the root causes of poverty, necessary for implementing systemic changes to tackle global poverty and to create a sense of real ownership for the Irish Aid programme amongst the people of Ireland (IDEA, 2011). As Development Education practitioners, we see development education as an intrinsic element of eradicating poverty and inequality, by empowering people to become active global citizens with the skills,

knowledge and attitudes to challenge the status quo and demand equity in global relations through campaign actions, education, awareness-raising and so on. Young people, in both formal and non-formal education are a key audience for development education. **NYCI calls on Irish Aid to continue to prioritise development education in both the non-formal and formal education sectors in order to increase public ownership of Irish Aid's work and to work with all stakeholders to implement the recommendations of the thematic review of development education, including in the voluntary youth sector. Furthermore, NYCI calls on Irish Aid to recognise the important role that migrant communities in Ireland, and migrant young people in particular, have in increasing public understanding of development and in changing people's attitudes to those in other parts of the world and to those people who have made Ireland their home.**

The language around development cooperation needs to be more accessible to a wider audience, including young people. **NYCI recommends that Irish Aid cuts down on the use of jargon, or aims to explore the meaning behind the sometimes complex terminology of international development with the public, in order to deepen public engagement.**

- Address the issue of youth unemployment

According to the International Labour Organisation, across the world young people are three times more likely to be unemployed than adults and over 75 million youth worldwide are looking for work (UN World Youth Report, 2012). The situation in Ireland reflects this global trend, with 1 in 4 young people under 25 being out of work (CSO, December 2010).

The rising level of youth unemployment and the failure of governments to effectively

address the issue had led to increased migration of young people in search of work and instability in some regions (ILO, 2010).

Recommendation:

NYCI recommends that Irish Aid considers the impact of youth unemployment in the countries in which it operates and supports initiatives that tackle youth unemployment, including apprenticeships and entrepreneurship programmes.

- Recognition and support for volunteering

Volunteering has long been recognised for its very significant contribution to society and the influential role that it can play in the creation of social capital, a more inclusive society, a better functioning democracy, more active citizens and an improved sense of community. Engagement of volunteers is one of the most visible expressions of solidarity and has the potential to harness innovative responses to development challenges (Lending a Hand, NYCI 2011; Policy Agenda for Volunteering in Europe, European Year of Volunteering Alliance, 2011).

Recommendation:

NYCI calls on Irish Aid to: Recognise the important role that volunteering plays in promoting active public engagement in development; value the role of volunteers and volunteering in the development of all related policies to actively promote the contribution that volunteering can make in fostering solidarity in society; encourage and support reciprocal volunteering programmes between countries in the Global South and Ireland, including putting in place specific funding mechanisms to support volunteering

initiatives; promote adherence to the Comhlámh Code of Good Practice for Volunteer Sending Agencies; and, recognise the important role played by local volunteers in the Global South to achieving key development targets and to work with partners in programme countries to support local volunteering initiatives.

- Promote the contribution of the business sector to development

Without the growth of indigenous industries in developing countries, many of the gains made through programmes like Irish Aid will be lost.

Recommendation:

NYCI recommends that Irish Aid uses its international reputation to promote global investment in developing countries, including in areas where Ireland has international credibility such as information technology and agriculture. NYCI agrees with Dóchas' recommendation that Irish Aid should encourage the contribution of the business sector to development, through ethical partnership, support and regulation.

2.5 Ways of Working

NYCI believes that Government departments need to join forces in the current economic climate to ensure effective development cooperation. **NYCI agrees with Dochas' and IDEA's recommendation for a whole Government approach to development policy and for coherence at a policy level between international development, trade, taxation as well as engaging the Department of Children and Youth Affairs in terms of youth work, development education and other policies related to children and youth.**

For young people today international development must be explained and understood as part of the more complex structures and processes of globalization. Children and young people must develop awareness and understanding to critically consider the negative and unfair outcomes of the economic and political system we are part of. We must go beyond a simple message of 'giving aid' to engaging the public in a critical reflection of the World we live in, and the effects of our daily lives and choices on people and countries around the World.' NYCI supports IDEA's proposal that the aid programme be reframed as development cooperation and that the language used needs to be carefully critiqued.

NYCI is a member of the 'Act now for 2015' campaign coordinated by Dóchas. Regular development debates in the Dáil and in the Seanad illustrate that there is interest among government members to uphold its commitment to ODA and highlight its importance to the public. **NYCI urges Irish Aid to restate its commitment to achieving the UN target of 0.7% of GNP as overseas development assistance by 2015. NYCI recommends that Irish Aid sets out a roadmap of how this target will be achieved by 2015, with explicit interim targets.**

Summary of Recommendations

- NYCI asserts that youth/young people need to be explicitly prioritised in Irish Aid’s programmes, as they are especially vulnerable to falling into poverty.
- NYCI call on Irish Aid to increase investment in raising public awareness through development education and meaningful public engagement, including volunteering for development.
- NYCI welcomes the continued focus on climate change as a cross-cutting issue for Irish Aid and, in line with the Stop Climate Chaos submission, urge Irish Aid to ensure that “effective action on climate change is inherently linked to and dependant on a shift in both developed and developing countries to development models which are socially, environmentally and economically sustainable.”
- NYCI recommends that Irish Aid plays an active role in developing a new internationally agreed agenda to combat poverty and inequality and inspire a vision for a world in which children and young adults can reach their full potential and contribute to their communities’ and countries’ development.
- NYCI call on Irish Aid to work closely with the development education sector and youth organisations to facilitate a sustainable transition to a results-focused model of development education. Irish Aid should state clearly what they mean by ‘quality’ and ‘impact’ and continue to work with the wider development education sector to develop clear measurable indicators of progress towards the desired outcomes.
- NYCI calls on Irish Aid to continue to push a development perspective through traditional media channels that goes beyond sound bites to engage Irish citizens in a more meaningful way.

- NYCI calls on Irish Aid to continue to push a development perspective through traditional media channels that goes beyond sound bites to engage Irish citizens in a more meaningful way.
- NYCI recommends that Irish Aid recognise the role and potential that social media can play in engaging people at home and in programme countries.
- NYCI recommends that Irish Aid plays an active role in developing a new internationally agreed agenda to combat poverty and inequality and inspire a vision for a world in which children and young adults can reach their full potential and contribute to their communities' and countries' development.'
- Irish Aid should specify the criteria that underpin its poverty focus. Furthermore, Irish Aid should clearly outline the human rights principles that inform its work, in line with its obligations under international human rights law, including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- NYCI calls on Irish Aid to explicitly prioritise children and young people, including adolescents, in the White Paper.
- NYCI urges Irish Aid to promote dialogue between young people and decision makers to influence policy-making across all its programmes.
- NYCI calls on Irish Aid to recognise and support the role of non-formal education including youth work to provide young people with the space to learn and critically engage around development and global justice issues.
- NYCI calls on Irish Aid to recognise youth work as *'a planned programme of education designed for the purpose of aiding and enhancing the personal and social development of young people... that is complementary to their formal academic or vocational*

education and training' (Youth Work Act, 2001) and to reference non-formal rather than informal education in the White Paper.

- NYCI calls on Irish Aid to continue to prioritise development education in both the non-formal and formal education sectors in order to increase public ownership of Irish Aid's work and to work with all stakeholders to implement the recommendations of the thematic review of development education, including in the voluntary youth sector.
- NYCI calls on Irish Aid to recognise and support the important role that youth organisations have in tackling poverty and inequality in its programme countries.
- NYCI calls on Irish Aid to recognise the important role that migrant communities in Ireland, and migrant young people in particular, have in increasing public understanding of development and in changing people's attitudes to those in other parts of the world and to those people who have made Ireland their home.
- NYCI recommends that Irish Aid cuts down on the use of jargon, or aims to explore the meaning behind the sometimes complex terminology of international development with the public, in order to deepen public engagement.
- NYCI recommends that Irish Aid considers the impact of youth unemployment in the countries in which it operates and supports initiatives that tackle youth unemployment, including apprenticeships and entrepreneurship programmes.
- NYCI calls on Irish Aid to: Recognise the important role that volunteering plays in promoting active public engagement in development; value the role of volunteers and volunteering in the development of all related policies to actively promote the contribution that volunteering can make in fostering solidarity in society; encourage and support reciprocal volunteering programmes between countries in the Global South and

Ireland, including putting in place specific funding mechanisms to support volunteering initiatives; promote adherence to the Comhlámh Code of Good Practice for Volunteer

Sending Agencies; and, recognise the important role played by local volunteers in the Global South to achieving key development targets and to work with partners in programme countries to support local volunteering initiatives.

- NYCI recommends that Irish Aid uses its international reputation to promote global investment in developing countries, including in areas where Ireland has international credibility such as information technology and agriculture. NYCI agrees with Dóchas' recommendation that Irish Aid should encourage the contribution of the business sector to development, through ethical partnership, support and regulation.
- NYCI agrees with Dochas' and IDEA's recommendation for a whole Government approach to development policy and for coherence at a policy level between international development, trade, taxation as well as engaging the Department of Children and Youth Affairs in terms of youth work, development education and other policies related to children and youth.
- NYCI urges Irish Aid to restate its commitment to achieving the UN target of 0.7% of GNP as overseas development assistance by 2015. NYCI recommends that Irish Aid sets out a roadmap of how this target will be achieved by 2015, with explicit interim targets.

Annex - Views of NYDEP's Youth Advisory Group

The group brainstormed on Ireland's role in relation to tackling poverty and inequality globally.

- Youth focused – [young people are the] future of countries
- Teach people to be self-sufficient – create both structures and opportunities (areas such as agriculture were mentioned)
- Government departments need to work together (“join forces”) – more effective in current economic climate
- Consider issues like alcohol/drugs, migration etc. – help people to get out of a rut
- [Change] people's attitudes to those in other parts of the world and to those people who have made Ireland their home
- Education is key – work at grassroots/community and industry level
- Work Government to government to ensure that people can take up opportunities
- Focus on information technology
- Support the growth of industry in developing countries
- Support global investment [in the Global South]
- Focus on peace – support peace activists and voluntary groups; ensure protection for refugees
- Have a more positive outlook
- Work at economic level with countries