

OECD / DAC Peer Review of Ireland's development cooperation programme

A Dóchas submission following up on the Ireland country visit

November 2008

Summary

Dóchas members feel it is important for the Peer Review team to consider:

Aid quantity: Ireland must continue to make progress towards the UN target of 0.7% of GNP in ODA by 2012 and to build on domestic and international support for Ireland's positive role in global development. This includes *introducing legislation* to safeguard Ireland's continued commitment to spending, from 2012 onward, at least 0.7% of GNP annually on overseas development aid;

Management: The government must *ensure that adequate structures, systems and resources are available, particularly to Irish Aid*, to deliver efficient and effective development cooperation for maximum impact on the lives of the world's poor, and especially those in Sub-Saharan Africa. Investments must be made in Irish Aid's capacity to engage with relevant EU institutions. Structures for independent advice and analysis (such as the Advisory Board for Irish Aid) and for political scrutiny of the aid programme are insufficiently resourced and must be strengthened;

Policy Coherence: The government must provide the *resources and political drive* to strengthen Policy Coherence for Development across all Departments and State agencies;

Active advocacy: The need for Irish Aid, but also the Irish Government more broadly, to *reinforce the open and strategic dialogue on development with key stakeholders*, including the Oireachtas and Civil Society Organisations, the range of diverse development actors in Ireland's development programme countries, and with the institutions of the EU, Global Funds and the UN;

Europe: The contribution of Ireland, in coordination with its EU partners and the EC to the achievement of the MDGs must be strengthened, especially through *targeted, transparent and effective spending on social sectors* (health, education) in developing countries, using an appropriate and accountable mix of aid modalities;

Civic engagement: Reverse the trend of falling expenditure (in percentage terms) on Development Education, and invest in programmes and activities that *encourage deeper civic engagement* with issues of global poverty and inequality.

The 2008 OECD DAC Peer Review is an important opportunity for a public discussion in Ireland about the quality of Ireland's development cooperation efforts.

To ensure the process results in further improvements of the Irish Aid programme, and of other Government development cooperation policy, Dóchas members have developed this submission to the OECD DAC Review Team. In this document, we have grouped our observations and concerns around some of the DAC's headline issues for the Review process. These are:

- Strategic Orientations
- Policy Coherence for Development
- ODA Volume, Channels & Allocations
- Organisation & Management
- Aid Effectiveness
- Special Issues chosen by Ireland:
 - Governance, Accountability & Anti-Corruption; and Capacity Development
 - Humanitarian Assistance

1. Strategic Orientations

Dóchas believes that it is essential that the national consensus on the importance of development cooperation is expressly and deliberately maintained despite the difficult economic situation in which Ireland finds itself. 2008 was an especially difficult year for the Irish economy: a dramatic drop in Government revenues brought deep cuts in public spending in a mini-Budget in July, then a tough Budget for 2009 and the prospect of further expenditure cuts, and/or tax increases, in 2009.

In July 2008, the Government announced that it was cutting the 2008 ODA budget by €45m (fully 10% of overall cuts) in its "spending adjustments".

In the 2009 Budget published in October, the Government largely shielded the ODA budget from the worst of the public spending cuts, projecting a total Irish ODA spend of €891m for 2009 and anticipating that it will reach 0.56% GNP/ODA in 2009.

Crucially, that still leaves it on track to meet its 0.6% target by 2010 and its 0.7% commitment by 2012. It is vital that Ireland reach that target, which it has often repeated at home and in international fora, and that it continue to maintain at least 0.7% in ODA spending after 2012.

Previous assessments of the Irish development cooperation programme have shown that it is generally of a high quality. The programme is characterised by a strong poverty focus, a balanced mix of aid modalities, a policy of untied aid, good partnerships with civil society and other partners, and a high degree of public support.

The publication of the 2006 *White Paper on Irish Aid* has provided the framework required for the expansion of the programme, which resulted from the government's commitment to increase ODA spending to meet the 0.7% target by 2012. Dóchas members have welcomed the publication and content of the White Paper, and have encouraged Irish Aid to formulate a clear Plan of Action to implement it.

Since the White Paper, some progress has been made towards addressing Ireland's policy coherence for development, with the creation of an Inter-Departmental Committee for Development (IDCD) in 2007. The committee published its first annual report in autumn 2008 (which identified 8 priority Departments in relation to PCD issues and said it would consider how to develop measurable indicators of progress) but it is still too early to say whether it will make a significant impact.

Dóchas welcomes the signal of intent that the Committee's creation represents, but is concerned at its apparent emphasis on finding 'synergies for development' across Government Departments – the second part of its remit – over addressing key incoherencies, which is the first and ought to be the primary part of its mandate.

Dóchas members consider that, unless it makes a significant improvement in relation to Policy Coherence for Development (especially tackling some of the difficult examples of incoherence rather than picking the 'low-hanging fruit' or looking only for synergies across Departments), Ireland risks undermining its own aid programme through other Government policies and practices.

Within the aid programme, Irish Aid has long strived to present a balance between the various aid modalities and funding channels. This has allowed it flexibility and a certain degree of risk management. Dóchas members would like to see greater clarity achieved, through consultation, on the criteria to be used in balancing the modalities in different countries and circumstances.

Dóchas considers that much of this discussion could take place in the context of dialogue on the Irish Aid policy on governance (long under development but on which Civil Society has not been consulted since an early first draft, which we understand bears little resemblance to the current document) and also on the Guidelines on General Budget Support.

Irish Aid has worked to develop a strong partnership with NGOs and civil society organisations. The 2008 Irish Aid Civil Society Policy is an excellent illustration of the high degree of commitment by Irish Aid to the crucial role of civil society organisations, both at home and overseas – a role recognised and celebrated in the Public Accounts Committee's interim report 2008 – although the nature and scope of that partnership is not always evident in Irish Aid policy development. Sometimes the dialogue on policy development is excellent but, on occasion, falls well short of that anticipated in Irish Aid's civil society policy and its stated partnership approach with NGOs.

Ireland's development cooperation programme benefits from a high level of public support, but faces a challenge in sustaining and even increasing that, especially as the economic downturn has brought financial cutbacks, including in basic social services, at home.

An estimated 850,000 people support the 39 member organisations of Dóchas and contribute large sums of money each year to their work. Irish Aid has invested significantly in efforts to enhance its public profile. Dóchas has pointed out that, while we recognise the need to provide high levels of accountability to the taxpayer, Irish Aid is in danger of confusing the need for long-term civic engagement on Development with the need for brand recognition for the Irish Aid programme.

Dóchas is particularly concerned by the continuing trend of falling percentage expenditure on Development Education, intended to move ordinary people through awareness and engagement to active involvement on development issues.

Political oversight of the Irish Aid programme remains weak. The Oireachtas Committee on Foreign Affairs and its sub-committee on Development Cooperation lack the institutional support to play as strong a role as they ought to in scrutinising and guiding the Irish Aid programme.

There is also considerable scope for the Joint Committee on European Affairs – and perhaps especially the Sub-Committee on EU Scrutiny – to play a key role in assuring that Irish development goals are reflected as well as possible in EU development policy and practice. Beyond that, these Committees could also play an active role ensuring that wider EU decisions, policies and practices do not undermine (but rather support and cohere with) those same development goals.

The mandate of the Advisory Board of Irish Aid remains too weak (and still unclear, with the Management Review of Irish Aid apparently complete but still not in the public domain), and the effectiveness and impact of its advisory role is likely to remain uncertain so as long as its advice to the Minister is not publicly available.

Ireland has identified many stated priority areas within development cooperation, among them basic social sectors, HIV & AIDS, humanitarian assistance, governance, conflict mitigation and, most recently, hunger. However, it is not clear which among these are to remain, or become, de facto priorities in the coming years – both because of the profusion of priorities and the still uncertain impact of wider initiatives in the sector.

The Paris Declaration, related EU Code of Conduct on Complementarity and Division of Labour, and the outcome of the recent High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Accra have implications for Ireland's priority sectors and interests, both at macro level and in specific developing countries, notably programme countries.

Some 30% of Irish multilateral aid is channelled through the EU Development Cooperation Budget and European Development Fund (EDF). Though Europe is committed to helping achieve the Millennium Development Goals, there are serious problems in relation to the targeting and impact of EC aid, its investment in basic social services, its growing expenditure through General Budget Support and its poverty reduction focus. The effectiveness and MDG orientation of EC aid must be improved, as must Irish Aid's capacity to seriously engage across the many issues in EU decision-making that affect developing countries.

A similar argument applies to Ireland's engagement with the agencies of the United Nations and the IFIs. Irish Aid capacity to engage with these agencies remains limited, and some of Ireland's decision-making in the World Bank and IMF is outside the effective zone of influence of Irish Aid. This begs questions about Ireland's policy coherence for development and, indeed, democratic accountability for Irish input and positions within these fora.

Ireland has invested hugely in its international standing in the field of development cooperation. Dóchas encourages the Government to protect that international reputation and to continually strive to move beyond the role of financial donor by engaging strategically in world affairs and multilateral institutions in support of peace, equity and justice.

2. Policy Coherence for Development

It is important to note that the fight against poverty is not merely a matter of providing assistance but of real development cooperation. Aid alone cannot and will not bring an end to poverty. In line with the policy commitment in the 2006 *White Paper on Irish Aid*, the Government should ensure

that its commitment to fighting global poverty is translated into a whole-of-government approach to supporting poor countries – and especially least developed countries.

Dóchas believes that Ireland needs to complement its effective aid policies by a coherent set of pro-development policies across other policy areas, including especially (but not limited to) trade, agriculture, energy and climate change.

Dóchas members are encouraged by the establishment in 2007 of the Inter-Departmental Committee for Development (IDCD) to promote Policy Coherence for Development across the Irish Government, and by its engagement to date with NGOs, academic institutions, ABIA and others in informing its work.

Dóchas eagerly awaits the detail of the Committee's priorities, strategy and work programme, and the ways in which it will seek to bring about real change, from policy decisions and guidelines up to and including Cabinet-level decisions.

To ensure that Ireland does not undercut its aid programme, Dóchas urges the Government to:

- Provide the resources, analytical capacity and political drive to strengthen Policy Coherence for Development across Departments and State agencies;
- In particular, ensure that the Inter-Departmental Committee on Development (IDCD) is better resourced to fulfil its role in a meaningful way, and given the political and resource backing to tackle legislative and policy decisions that negatively affect developing countries – especially in relation to trade, agriculture, climate change and energy, and international tax, capital and other financial flows.
- Establish a mechanism (perhaps through adapting the Regulatory Impact Assessment tool of the Better Regulation Unit of the Irish Government) to deliver at least light “poverty proofing” of key areas of Government legislation and policy, including those that arise from EU legislation, policies and practices;
- Ensure regular meetings between the Department of the Taoiseach and Ministers for Development, Foreign Affairs, Trade, Agriculture and Justice (and others as required) to ensure top level leadership on Policy Coherence for Development; and
- Enhance the transparency of Ireland's policy stances in relation to international trade and development (for instance at the WTO talks and IFI and EU meetings) by strengthening engagement with Civil Society organisations as well as debate in the Oireachtas on these matters.

3. ODA Volume, Channels & Allocations

In September 2005, the Government committed to meeting the UN target of spending 0.7% of GNP annually on ODA by 2012. Despite a worrying cut in real terms of the aid budget in July 2008, the Government remains on track at the time of writing to deliver on its aid spending commitment. Dóchas members welcome this fact and look forward to the Government reaching its own interim target of 0.6% in ODA/GNP by 2010, as a concrete expression of its commitment to reaching the 0.7% target by 2012 and sustaining at least that level afterwards.

It is also important to development NGOs, the Irish public – and, most importantly to the poor in developing countries -- that Ireland's ODA spending has a clearly demonstrable impact. Ireland must ensure that all the mechanisms are in place to ensure the continued high quality of Irish aid. This involves strengthening public scrutiny and oversight mechanisms, as well as resourcing the

mechanisms within Irish Aid and other relevant government Departments to appraise, monitor and evaluate programme expenditures and efficiency – but especially programme impact.

*In relation to the **quantity of aid**, Dóchas urges the Government to:*

- Ensure that Ireland programmes its spending on ODA to reach the Government's interim target of 0.6% in 2010 and the 0.7% commitment by 2012;
- Bring forward new legislation and procedural arrangements to ensure that by 2012 and after that date, all Irish governments maintain annual ODA spending at a minimum of 0.7% of GNP.
- Encourage EU member states to set and work to meet clear timetables for achieving their set aid targets so that Europe will fulfil the commitment it has made to collectively reaching the 0.7% target by 2015.

*In relation to the **quality of aid**, Dóchas urges the Government to:*

- Ensure that Irish aid is provided in a manner that is responsive to, and supportive of, the priorities defined by recipient countries, in consultation with parliaments and civil society in those countries;
- Assure the poverty focus and continuing 'untied' nature of the Irish development cooperation programme, specifically precluding the use of aid money for security, migration or commercial purposes;
- Urgently facilitate the release of, and response to, the Management Review of Irish Aid; and particularly ensure that Irish Aid has the structures, systems and staff levels to operate a programme at the 0.7% ODA level, including necessary liaison with EU and EC structures, the UN, IFIs and Civil Society Organisations;
- Continue to disburse its funding based on a thorough context analysis of each programme country and its capacity to absorb different modalities of funding.
- Ensure that Irish Aid supports public financial management capacity, audit and oversight mechanisms, and civil society capacity, to hold development actors and institutions – both Northern and Southern - to account.
- Analyse and mitigate the negative effects on the Irish development cooperation programme of the relocation of Irish Aid to Limerick;
- Engage proactively with the EU and other international institutions to ensure coherence with Ireland's development goals, to the greatest extent possible, such that they play a positive and progressive role in the eradication of global poverty;
- Ensure that all Irish ODA efforts include practical actions to promote gender equality, which is a prerequisite for developmental processes, by applying gender sensitive programming and analysis across the board. Irish Aid's programmes and policy would be strengthened if further efforts were put in place to systematically incorporate gender analysis at all levels of the programme and at all stages of the development process.

For Irish Aid to engage more strategically with the wide range of policy areas within its remit, it remains imperative to continue to invest in the building of internal capacity, as well as the capacity of its core partners. Training policies are essential in this respect, but the loss of expertise through staff rotation and the low level of engagement in sector-wide learning processes similarly need to be addressed.¹

¹ For more detailed comments on the Irish Aid management structures and procedures, see the Dóchas submission to the Strategic Management Review: <http://www.dochas.ie/documents/dochas-aid-review.pdf>

At present, there is a widespread feeling among Dóchas members and their colleagues across Europe that EC and EU aid are not optimal. There are issues and concerns in relation to European governments' tendency to 'inflate' their aid budgets with non-development related expenditures and to tie their aid to domestic interests. EC aid, administered by the European Commission, is opaque and cumbersome. The MDG focus of EC aid programmes is a recurrent weakness and there are issues of insufficient political leadership and political accountability. On all these issues, Ireland should play an active role.

With the high and growing importance of the EU as a channel for Irish aid, the current capacity within Irish Aid to engage meaningfully with EU development policy is insufficient. European aid and development policy are of enormous importance for development issues globally, including the work of our members. Dóchas urges the OECD/DAC to encourage the Irish government to invest significant energy and time to ensure that EU and EC aid have the greatest possible impact on eradicating and mitigating global poverty (and that wider EU policies do not undermine those efforts).

To enhance the impact of EU aid, Dóchas urges the Irish Government to:

- Promote clear and systematic focus on the impact of EU aid. Evaluation of Europe's aid programmes should include a specific assessment of the impact of its aid on the achievement of the MDGs;
- Ensure targeted and transparent spending towards achieving the MDGs, both through the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) and the European Development Fund. Ireland needs to work within the Council of Ministers and with the European Commission to ensure that agreed EC targets of 20% of spending in basic health and education (which apply to all developing countries with which the EU has aid programmes) are met in fact;
- Encourage that EU aid be fully untied and economic policy conditions phased out;
- Strongly advocate that EU aid is made more transparent (with information on EU aid made available in a timely and accessible way) and more accountable (through the establishment of independent monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, including a complaints mechanism open to those affected by EU aid);
- Ensure that the EU commitment to *policy coherence for development* is fully protected and operationalised under the proposed External Action Service.

4. Organisation & Management

Dóchas members welcome the Management Review of Irish Aid and looking forward to seeing the published outcomes and decisions, and how these will be implemented to ensure the consolidation and further enhancement of the development cooperation programme over time.

NGOs appreciate the government's recognition of the urgent need to review management structures and procedures (above and beyond addressing important issues around the number, location, rotation and retention of expert and professional staff) in light of Ireland's commitment to achieve the 0.7% ODA/GNP target by 2012.

Publication of the Management Review would provide an opportunity to publicly debate the future of Ireland's development cooperation efforts and the business of finding appropriate mechanisms and resources to turn the vision of the *White Paper on Irish Aid* into reality.

Dóchas encourages the Government – it would be very useful in the context of a public forum on the draft outcomes of the DAC Peer Review, the outcomes of which could feed into the final report – to seize that opportunity to discuss the findings and implications of the Management Review.

In relation to Irish Aid management capacity, Dóchas recommends that:

- The structure and management systems of Irish Aid should reflect its core mission and strategy, allow for better analysis and institutional learning, and a better reflection of that learning at all levels of the organisation's areas of work;
- Ireland – and Irish Aid within that – must move from being a donor, to becoming a development actor. That means it needs to engage more fully and actively with its key development partners, including especially the EU and prioritised UN agencies; the IFIs, Civil Society partners, and prioritised global and vertical funds.
- Irish Aid and closely linked inter-Departmental structures, such as the IDCD, need to be resourced and structured in ways that allow them to maximise the potential for Policy Coherence for Development;
- Irish Aid, along with other Government Departments and agencies contributing to the Irish development cooperation programme, must focus not just on financial accounting and efficiency but also on being accountable for development effectiveness, including through an integrated, results- and impact-oriented Annual Report on Irish ODA (rather than the current Irish Aid report with brief details on other ODA elements.)
- The accountability and transparency of the Irish development cooperation programme should be enhanced, by strengthening mechanisms for evaluation, transparency and parliamentary oversight.

(For more information in relation to Irish Aid aspects of the ODA programme, see Dóchas' submission to the Irish Aid Management Review at: <http://www.dochas.ie/documents/Dóchas-aid-review.pdf>)

Dóchas strongly advocated that the relocation of Irish Aid to Limerick, which deviated from one of the core recommendations of the Ireland Aid Review, should be stopped. (See submission at www.dochas.ie). That battle was lost, but *Dóchas suggests that it would still be timely and useful for the OECD/DAC – and the Irish Government itself – to analyse and help mitigate the negative effects on the Irish development cooperation programme of the relocation of Irish Aid to Limerick.*

5. Aid Effectiveness

Ireland took a strong leadership role in the negotiations at the High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Accra in September '08, ensuring that a better outcome document was agreed by donors and Southern governments. Ireland also made a vital contribution to the outcomes on Mutual Accountability and to ensuring that gender equality was given high priority in the discussions.

Dóchas considers that the precise implications for development of the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action are still hard to ascertain. Overall, Dóchas members are positively disposed to attempts by donors to enhance their effectiveness, but have some concerns that the process seems to focus too much on technicalities relating to aid efficiency and too little on improving donors' development effectiveness, in terms of positive outcomes for poor people, and accountability.

Progress made by donors, including Ireland, to meeting the targets of the Paris Declaration has been slow. Ireland must put in place specific strategies to scale up its response to meet the commitments of the Paris Declaration agreed to in 2005, as well as the further commitments included in the Accra Agenda for Action.

Dóchas and its members continue to encourage the Irish government to see aid effectiveness as one element in the broader goal of development effectiveness, which includes the realisation of human rights, progress on environmental sustainability and social inclusion. This wider view of development is essential if Ireland is to take a holistic approach to the achievement of the MDGs as well as its role in relation to Financing for Development. Aid effectiveness must not be seen as an end in itself but as one element contributing to development effectiveness.

Dóchas members are also somewhat anxious about the potential for the Paris process (and the EU's related Specialisation and Division of Labour) to undercut Irish Aid's particular poverty focus and positive bias towards basic social services.

The Irish government has made serious attempts to begin the implementation of the White Paper, and to align these efforts with existing commitments to the MDGs and the Paris Declaration. It is too early to say whether adequate mechanisms and manpower will be put in place to ensure these steps are sustained and result in effective delivery on plans and policies.

As mentioned elsewhere in this document, Dóchas has concerns over Irish Aid's capacity – as things currently stand with staffing, structures and responsibilities – to engage effectively with some of the multilateral and global bodies funded through Irish ODA, and to monitor their effectiveness and development impact.

6. Special Issues: Governance, Accountability & Anti-Corruption

The *White Paper on Irish Aid* identifies governance as a key crosscutting issue within Ireland's development cooperation programme, and various related strands of work, including support for democracy and rule of law, African institutions, public sector reform and financial management, civil society, and anti-corruption initiatives.

Important work is continuing by Irish Aid at country level on different aspects of governance, but Dóchas members are concerned that there seems to be a constant and oversimplified linkage between governance, on the one hand, and combating corruption on the other – including within Irish Aid's own communications. This is worrying because there are other key governance elements (accountability, transparency, justice and rule of law, and capacity building) that are important in their own right.

Dóchas members are still awaiting the Irish Aid policy paper setting out Ireland's priorities and approaches on governance. Dóchas members are concerned by the delay and the limited, insufficient dialogue with development partners on this important policy, yet keenly anticipate both its release and the strategies and approaches envisaged to implement it.

Irish Aid's civil society policy and strategy has been developed, in close dialogue with NGDOs and other stakeholders, setting out how it will support civil society (in programme countries and Ireland alike) to fight poverty, achieve sustainable development, promote human rights and contribute to good governance. Irish Aid's civil society policy is a very useful and welcome addition to Ireland's policy framework supporting development cooperation, and one which Dóchas members look forward to being drawn on across the different sections of Irish Aid – and, indeed, the Irish Government more widely.

Much in the news in Ireland, whether discussed in the context of the development cooperation programme or domestic tribunals of enquiry, corruption is a serious development problem with complex causes and consequences, both in rich and poor countries. In developing countries,

corruption is seen by civil society organisations as one among many key governance problems. Others include lack of political accountability, constraints on freedom of expression, and excessive influence of foreign donors and transnational corporations on national policy.

Ireland is keen to take a strong stand on corruption, with a special focus on protecting the Irish taxpayer and providing value for money while also supporting public financial management and oversight systems, and civil society capacity to monitor and tackle corruption. However, Ireland would be seen to have much stronger standing in its efforts to combat corruption if it saw its way to ratifying and implementing without delay the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC); acting decisively to promote and implement the OECD Anti-Bribery Convention, and support that Convention's Peer Review mechanisms; and striving to ensure that EU states or companies do not undermine financing for development through tax evasion or avoidance, or facilitation of capital flight at the expense of developing countries.

In its programme countries, the Irish aid programme should:

- Be transparent about its own inputs, outcomes and impact; and
- Help build the capacity of parliaments, public accounts committees, citizens and others (private sector, media, academics) to hold their own governments to account for the use of all public financial resources, including foreign aid.

At EU, multilateral and global levels, especially, Ireland should work to:

- Enable the European Parliament to play its role in ensuring that EU budgets and EU programmes (under both the EDF and the DCI) are scrutinised and adequately targeted towards the achievement of the MDGs and the elimination of world poverty.;
- Support the planned phasing-out of economic policy conditionality attached to aid in favour of more mutually accountable, contractual agreements with partner countries, based on locally defined and prioritised development plans;
- Ensure full and democratic ownership of aid priorities by developing countries through a process of meaningful participation by parliament, civil society and local communities in EC development cooperation. Democratic mechanisms must be embedded in decision-making processes at EU level, as well as in partner countries;
- See to it that the EU develops mechanisms through which civil society organisations can play a role in monitoring budget support programme.

To support accountable government and eradicating corruption, Dóchas urges that the Irish Government:

- Ensure full transparency on Irish ODA spending, effectiveness and impact, both through Irish Aid and other Government Departments – in 2007, Government Departments other than the Department of Foreign Affairs accounted for some 7.25% of total Irish ODA – but also in and by programme countries;
- Publish current and planned Irish aid flows in Irish Aid programme countries, and encourage other donors to do likewise;
- Help partner country governments and their citizens ensure good governance and sound public financial management (including tackling corruption) by supporting the oversight functions of domestic civil society, parliaments, media and the judiciary;
- At the same time, ratify and fully implement the United Nations Convention against Corruption; promote and fully implement the OECD Anti-Bribery Convention, including supporting its Peer Review mechanisms; support initiatives to ensure that extractive industries do not promote or facilitate corrupt practices; and

- Support global efforts to ensure a level playing field for developing countries by actively striving for progress on MDG 8 (which developed countries have a primary responsibility to deliver), including through:
 - Much improved Financing for Development;
 - Fair rules and regulations for international trade and financial flows;
 - An effective global deal on climate change, including ODA-plus financing for mitigation and adaptation in developing countries;
 - Democratic reform of the International Financial Institutions;
 - Faster, deeper and sustainable debt relief; and
 - Equitable access by developing countries to technology.

7. Special Issues: Capacity Development

It is not clear to Dóchas whether this is intended to address capacity development within Irish Aid and key partners, or the Irish development cooperation programme's contribution to capacity development in developing countries. If the Peer Review team could clarify that, Dóchas could consider whether and how to address this in any follow-up submission.

8. Humanitarian Assistance

Ireland is a progressive, flexible and reasonable donor in relation to humanitarian assistance. In Dóchas members' dealings with them, Irish Aid generally displays a degree of pragmatism, flexibility and openness to dialogue, including but not just in relation to funding matters, which has a tangible impact upon how NGOs can support and interact with their partners. This flexibility has a direct impact on beneficiaries, as NGOs' funding and technical support can then be directed to where it is most needed in a timely and efficient manner. At a broader level, Irish Aid provides untied aid and it supports the most important principles of Good Humanitarian Donorship.

Ireland scores well overall in the Humanitarian Response Index (ranking 6th of 23 OECD donors and with a score equivalent to 69%) devised to track Good Humanitarian Donorship, but scores less well in responding to sudden-onset disasters, strengthening local capacity to deal with disasters, implementing international guiding principles, and promoting learning and accountability.

More immediately, Dóchas members are concerned at the scope and focus of the current draft Irish Aid relief policy, notably about the decision to progress a relief policy at all – and then what appears a somewhat rushed and incomplete one – rather than a more holistic, overarching humanitarian policy.

Ireland does not have an overarching integrated policy that addresses all aspects of humanitarian programming. By publishing an abridged relief policy, it risks fails undermining its stated support for Linking Relief, Rehabilitation & Development and setting a precedent for a fragmented approach to programming.

Dóchas members have also raised concerns at apparent policy directions referred to in the 'draft relief policy' but which are new to NGO partners, appear to have a new emphasis, or for which the rationale is absent or incomplete. These include, for example: greater use of pooled donor funding; humanitarian programming being 'informed by' or coherent with foreign policy (in possible contradiction with humanitarian principles); and the role of private companies in humanitarian relief.

Dóchas Humanitarian Aid Working Group has made a substantive submission to the Emergency & Recovery Section on suggested revisions, but has no feedback so far as to whether or how its

concerns will be taken into account in a thorough review, which it has suggested, of the draft relief policy.

NGDOs are also hoping that Irish Aid will set out clearly in a comprehensive policy document the rationale for Ireland funding humanitarian responses; the broad proportion of Irish ODA expected to be involved; Ireland's relative emphasis on chronic, sudden-onset and forgotten emergencies; measures to help prevent and mitigate disasters, and to help developing countries do likewise; and the comparative advantage Irish Aid offers in certain specific areas of focus (geographic or thematic), along with the actions proposed in each policy area.

Dóchas encourages the OECD/DAC to urge that Irish Aid promptly reviews the operation of the Special Emergency Funds for NGOs after its pilot phase ends in 2009, and considers its effectiveness and applicability for partners other than the 3 involved thus far.

Finally, Dóchas understands that the planned study visit to Liberia to consider Ireland's humanitarian programme is not happening, and wonders what approach (if anything) is envisaged to explore this area further.

End Note

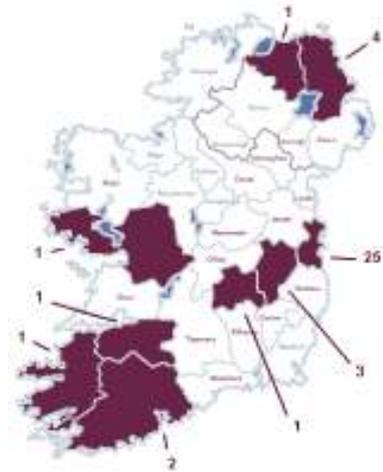
Dóchas is delighted to have had the opportunity to meet the DAC Peer Review team during its deliberation in Ireland and welcomes the inclusion of civil society in this process, notwithstanding reservations about the arrangements, discussion formats, inclusiveness and inclusion criteria, among other issues.

Dóchas feels that the process and mechanisms for including civil society in Peer Review exercise could be enhanced in the future, and that national NGO platforms are an obvious partner for any such efforts, perhaps working through CONCORD (the European Confederation of Relief and Development NGOs) and other such bodies.

Dóchas and its members remain open to discussing further those matters raised in the Peer Review visit to Dublin, in other discussions or in this submission. In particular, we would welcome discussion of the draft Peer Review findings in a public forum in Ireland (with parliamentary, civil society and other public involvement) as part of the overall Review goal of improving policies, practices, effectiveness and impact.

Dóchas Member Agencies

Action Aid Ireland
Action from Ireland
Aidlink
Amnesty International-Irish Section
Bóthar
Centre for Global Education
ChildFund Ireland
Children in Crossfire
Christian Aid Ireland
Church Mission Society Ireland
Comhlámh
Concern Worldwide
Friends of Londiani (Ireland)
Galway One World Centre
Gorta
International Service Ireland
Irish League of Credit Unions Foundation
Irish Commission for Justice and Social Affairs
Irish Council for International Students
Irish Family Planning Association
Irish Foundation for Cooperative Development
Irish Missionary Union
Irish Red Cross
Kerry Action for Development Education
National Youth Council of Ireland
Oxfam Ireland
Plan Ireland
Self Help Africa
Skillshare International Ireland
Suas Educational Development
The Hope Foundation
Trócaire
Vita
Voluntary Service International
Voluntary Service Overseas
Volunteer Missionary Movement
War on Want Northern Ireland
Wingspread International
World Vision Ireland



Dóchas member organisations:

- ⇒ *Have headquarters in nine counties;*
- ⇒ *Have a combined turnover of over €300 million;*
- ⇒ *Are supported by over 850,000 people in 32 counties;*
- ⇒ *Employ over 900 people in Ireland, and many more in developing countries.*