



The Irish Association of Non-Governmental  
Development Organisations

**Submission to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in respect of  
Irish Aid White Paper Consultation on Ireland's New International Development Policy  
Dochas Humanitarian Aid Working Group**

- Nature of views: **Organisational**
- Organisation (if applicable): **Dochas – Humanitarian Aid Working Group (HAWG)**  
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## Reaching the furthest behind: Principled Humanitarian Action in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

*“For too long, empty pledges and fine words have died in our mouths – now is the time to turn promises into action for this generation. So, let us honour those who have worked so hard to prevent, reduce and respond to conflicts, who have helped pick up the pieces in a broken world, but let us not shrink from the reality of the deep political and intellectual failures, with which we must deal, from which we must depart.”* President Michael D Higgins (World Humanitarian Summit, 2015)

The Dóchas Humanitarian Aid Working Group (HAWG) is a group of NGOs that share their resources and expertise and collectively work together to engage with a wide range of key stakeholders (including the Irish Government, EU institutions, the Irish public, the media and other institutions). We collaborate to promote dialogue and influence key actors relating to humanitarian policy, increase public awareness and understanding of humanitarian principles and practice, and contribute to improvements in humanitarian action.

As multi-mandate agencies based in Ireland and working across the globe, we recognise both the essential role of humanitarian assistance and acknowledge, but retain reservations about the nexus of humanitarian, development and peace-building. We are fully committed to delivering accountable and inclusive programmes that respond to need and aim to fulfil rights, and are designed with programme participants and communities, and we share these participants’ vision of safety, security and peace.

### **1. What elements of Ireland’s international development experience should the new policy reflect?**

In 2017, conflict and natural disasters forcibly displaced more than 30 million people. Conflict is the single greatest driver of humanitarian crisis today with over 85% of humanitarian funding directed to addressing needs in conflict-affected contexts<sup>1</sup>. By 2030, it is expected that more than 60% of the extreme poor will be living in fragile and conflict-affected states.<sup>2</sup>

**Addressing the challenges faced by conflict-affected populations requires greater effort on the part of the international community, particularly in preventing and**

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<sup>1</sup> UN (2016), One Humanity: Shared Responsibility – Report of the Secretary-General for the World Humanitarian Summit, <http://sgreport.worldhumanitariansummit.org/>.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/fragilityconflictviolence/overview>.

**minimising conflict and ensuring that adequate and timely assistance is available to those who need it.**

At a time of such enormous challenges globally, a new International Development Policy reiterating the intention to reach 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) in Official Development Assistance (ODA) by 2030 is essential and timely. In the previous International Development Policy, 'One World, One Future' (2013), the government set out its response to the significant change the world was seeing. **The new policy will need to continue with but also reinforce measures already taken in the fight against poverty, inequality and vulnerability, reiterating commitments to principled humanitarian assistance, reinforced by sound policies and practice across all of government mechanisms, whether domestically or internationally.**

'Ireland's Humanitarian Assistance Policy' (2015) outlines the approach of the Irish Government to support humanitarian action. Committed to saving and protecting lives, alleviating suffering and maintaining human dignity before, during and in the aftermath of humanitarian crises, the policy has allowed Irish Aid to do more with available funding, support a variety of partners in their work, and increase Ireland's reputation as a principled aid donor. However, now more than ever before, it is imperative that Ireland, as a now established humanitarian donor, reiterates and fulfils commitments to principled humanitarian aid, maintains ethical decision-making and ensures that the needs of disaster and affected populations are the first and only consideration in decision-making.

Consistent with these commitments and principles, we welcome and encourage Irish Aid to continue to support NGOs through the provision of multi-annual funding. Predictable, long-term funding is essential to the design and delivery of humanitarian aid, especially in protracted complex contexts. We call on Irish Aid to consider increasing its commitment and the funding allocation to humanitarian action and to the essential role of Irish NGOs.

**The Irish Government must ensure that its Grand Bargain Commitments<sup>3</sup>, the principles of Good Humanitarian Donorship<sup>4</sup>, and the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid<sup>5</sup> shape Ireland's humanitarian programme.**

As implementing partners of Irish Aid, Irish humanitarian agencies value a strong collaborative and supportive relationship with Irish Aid – not just as donor and implementers,

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<sup>3</sup> [https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/ireland\\_-\\_self\\_report\\_.pdf](https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/ireland_-_self_report_.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ghdinitiative.org/ghd/gns/home-page.html>

<sup>5</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/echo/who/humanitarian-aid-and-civil-protection/european-consensus\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/echo/who/humanitarian-aid-and-civil-protection/european-consensus_en)

but as peers working to address inequality and alleviate suffering. **Strengthening dialogue with the Irish NGO Community will promote a deeper understanding of contexts where Irish Aid is not present or is unable to access locations.**

The consultations and engagement across the wider Irish humanitarian community ahead of and during the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) defined Ireland's contribution to the WHS as committed and relevant. The contribution of President Michael D Higgins, with the support of Irish Aid, was powerful. **Ireland had and still has the power to make other countries sit up and listen, to say important things from which others shy away, and to stand firm on the protection and promotion of humanitarian principles.**

## **2. What are the implications of the changing global context for Ireland's international development cooperation and humanitarian action?**

Humanitarian aid is a vital lifeline for women, men and children when crises occur, whether man-made as a result of actions taken (or not), for example an armed attack or poor urban planning, or natural events such as earthquakes, typhoons or droughts. Aid reflects our collective commitment to humanity, and must ease the struggle to deal with the immediate crisis, and avoid further vulnerability to secondary crises or the need for crisis-affected people to resort to negative coping strategies. **For many millions of people, crisis has become a state of normality.** The inability and unwillingness of duty bearers to address protracted and emerging crises represent some of the greatest challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

An estimated 201 million people in 134 countries needed international humanitarian assistance in 2017, a fifth of whom were in just three countries – Syria, Yemen and Turkey (as a refugee hosting country)<sup>6</sup>. 84% of humanitarian aid is allocated to crises of more than three years, and 69% to crises lasting more than ten years<sup>7</sup>. A small number of complex crises continued to absorb the majority of humanitarian assistance – 60% of all assistance was channelled to 10 countries, with 14% going to Syria, the largest recipient, and 8% to Yemen, the second-largest<sup>8</sup>. “Humanitarian traps” are forming, where emergency response stakeholders are present for years and repeated short-term fixes are being used to replace

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<sup>6</sup> <http://devinit.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/GHA-Report-2018.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/emergency-humanitarian-action/france-s-humanitarian-strategy-2018-2022/>

<sup>8</sup> <http://devinit.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/GHA-Report-2018.pdf>

necessary and viable long-term solutions. These situations - to which the world seems increasingly numb - risk becoming “neglected crises”, abandoned by international funding efforts despite unchanged needs and deepening vulnerability.

The UN estimates that \$25.4 billion will be required to reach 95.8 million people in 2018, but that over 134 million people are in need<sup>9</sup>. The level of need consistently outweighs the available capacity, and while humanitarian action saves millions of lives, it faces enormous and often impossible challenges. As referenced above, this new reality, and the now heightened demand on NGOs to save more lives and meet ever greater needs in increasingly inaccessible spaces while meeting higher performance standards, while working in the context of heightened risk, increases the challenges and costs of delivering principled assistance.

**There is without question a growing challenge for humanity in 2018. While not every crisis is unprecedented in its nature, there is an increasing disregard for respect for human life, universal values and principled humanitarian action.**

One hundred and thirty-nine aid workers were murdered while delivering humanitarian assistance in 2017, and 158 major attacks occurred on humanitarian operations across 22 countries, affecting 313 aid workers globally<sup>10</sup>. Crucially, and despite all of the enhanced security measures put in place, 2017 marked a three-year high in the number of victims of attacks on aid operations. Because these attacks took place mostly in contexts of severely constrained access for international aid organisations, there was a steep rise in the number of victims belonging to national and local NGOs, reflecting the near universal reliance on brave and dedicated national staff and organisations to take on the riskiest of operational roles in the most insecure areas. This poses ethical and practical questions on the realities of the localisation strategy and its attendant implications on security and safety of local partners.

The new norm that disaster affected people are confronted with is one of disregard for Refugee, Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law. A sense of impunity is common place and condemnation, so necessary to preserving the integrity and respect for accepted legal norms, of parties who bomb hospitals, schools and civilians facilities, is increasingly muted. Constraints on access of humanitarian organisations to disaster-affected communities, and these communities’ access to assistance, have become more

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/GHO2018.PDF>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.humanitarianoutcomes.org/publications/figures-glance-2018>

complicated. **Humanitarian actors face greater risk in ensuring that those in most need receive timely, appropriate and principled assistance to aid survival and recovery.**

Foreign aid is increasingly seen by some donors as an instrument of soft and intrusive power and, alarmingly, is being used by some as a conflict management tool with decisions being driven by security concerns. The governments of some countries in which humanitarian assistance is being provided are suspicious of humanitarian organisations who deliver it. As a result, international and national humanitarian organisations are increasingly targeted by violence and aggression, and are delayed and diverted by bureaucratic obstacles in their mission. Violent attacks on humanitarian staff and their assets are commonplace, forcing NGOs to make ever more difficult choices between meeting the humanitarian imperative and the obligation to ensure the safety of their staff. Furthermore, **aid is increasingly instrumentalised, with the lives and well-being of those most dependent on it often compromised by deliberate denial of their access to it.**

**Climate change ranks amongst the greatest global problems of the 21st Century and the impact of climate-related crises is clear.** Although climate change is a global issue, people with the fewest resources have the least capacity to adapt and therefore are the most vulnerable.

Climate change will alter the frequency, intensity, duration, timing and location of sudden- and slow-onset climate-related hazards. In 2016, over 24 million people were newly displaced by sudden-onset climate-related hazards such as typhoons and floods<sup>11</sup>.

**Ireland's commitment to protect those in greatest need and to 'leave no one behind is clear'. No other country can claim a record of accomplished diplomatic success in brokering the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and negotiating the New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants.**

We welcome the Irish government's plan to double Ireland's worldwide scope and impact by 2025 as presented in 'Global Ireland: Ireland's Global Footprint to 2025'<sup>12</sup>. 'The Global Island: Ireland's Foreign Policy for a Changing World' is based on the fundamental principles of justice, human rights, the rule of international law and support for peace and friendly co-operation between nations. **These values must guide Ireland's engagement as a**

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/11874.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.ireland.ie/en/stories/global-ireland-irelands-global-footprint-2025>

member of the EU, as participation in the UN increases, and in partnership with like-minded countries and other actors.

**3. Do the proposed priorities respond to the changing context and contribute to the achievement of our vision of a more equal, peaceful, sustainable world?**

**The prevention, humanitarian response to and rapid resolution of conflict should be central to the new International Development Policy. While there is increasing recognition that sustainable development, humanitarian action, disaster preparedness and gender equality are interconnected, the common denominator is peace.**

Reducing humanitarian need is an identified priority area in the consultation document. The HAWG welcomes this, but calls for an enhanced focus on principled humanitarian response. **On an annual basis, humanitarian need far outweighs financial support or the political will to provide those in need with basic assistance, or any hope in the immediate future.** Reducing humanitarian need requires greater engagement in diplomatic and political arenas before a conflict has generated a humanitarian crisis.

While preventing and ending need is essential, **the reality of humanitarian crises requires a commitment from donors to continue to support people living in desperate need, in contexts that are no longer strictly humanitarian but where development is not possible or supported.**

**The new International Development Policy is an important opportunity for Irish Aid to make a bold statement that puts the protection of civilians at the centre.** The policy must clearly signal Ireland's values, the commitment to peace and security, and accountability of States to invest in and promote peace and prosperity.

### ***Displacement***

Humanitarian aid does not end conflict or prevent migration or displacement. Nor can it be a substitute for state failure to fulfil obligations to protect and support its citizens.

Displacement is a growing challenge with 40 million people currently displaced within their own country due to violence<sup>13</sup>. Urbanisation and displacement in and to urban contexts is

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.unhcr.org/en-ie/news/stories/2018/6/5b222c494/forced-displacement-record-685-million.html>

rising and, for the first time in human history, more people live in urban than rural environments.

Many displacement situations, such as the complex emergencies in DRC, Somalia and Yemen, are characterised by high levels of violence and vulnerability. New waves of violence in 2017-18, in the Central African Republic, Ethiopia, El Salvador, Somalia and South Sudan, and failed ceasefires in Syria and Ukraine resulted in increased numbers of displaced people. Tropical cyclones resulted in high levels of displacement associated with disasters as Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria broke several records in the Atlantic and Caribbean, and a series of typhoons in South and East Asia and the Pacific displaced large numbers of people throughout the year<sup>14</sup>.

Displacement in urban settings, in Iraq and Syria, bring specific challenges in terms of humanitarian access, the delivery of basic services and heightened vulnerabilities for displaced people. **In 2017, 30.6 million new internal displacements were associated with conflict and disasters across 143 countries and territories.** The number of new displacements associated with conflict and violence almost doubled, from 6.9 million in 2016 to 11.8 million in 2017<sup>15</sup>. Syria, DRC and Iraq together accounted for more than half of the global figure. These figures signify the collective failure to address existing internal displacement and to reduce the risk of future displacement.

Displacement is not a short-term inconvenience. It is a devastating change that fundamentally affects families and communities for decades. Every social safety net disappears as children cannot access continuous quality education, parents are left without employment, health care is either sporadic or non-existent and families may face the legal limbo of statelessness. Refugee status is proving harder to secure as countries prioritise domestic interests over international obligations under the Refugee Convention.

Principled efforts to minimise and prevent displacement in conflict settings are vital to ensure that children can complete school and live a healthy life in peace. Increased engagement on migration policy within the EU is necessary to shift the debate. The politics of migration is multidimensional but increasingly, nationalistic and domestic considerations override principles and obligations. A number of EU Member States contribute to an aggressive and divisive narrative that questions and threatens the principles of and commitments to

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<sup>14</sup> <http://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2018/>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2018/>



humanitarian assistance. The misuse of development aid budgets for security and migration control cannot go unchecked.

Since the publication of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement in 1998,<sup>16</sup> programmes and policies to protect and assist IDPs have proven insufficient to cope with the growing number of new displacements or the cumulative number of IDPs over time. A new approach is essential. Beyond the need to improve humanitarian responses to these crises, more investments must be made at the national and international levels in sustainable development, peacebuilding, addressing the impacts of climate change and disaster risk reduction.<sup>17</sup> **Failure to address long-term displacement has the potential to undermine the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and progress on other international agreements.**

### ***The responsibility of States***

The International Bill of Rights, together with the core international human rights instruments and standards, form the fundamental premise and basis for development aid. States often cause or aggravate people's vulnerabilities to abuse, violations, and fail to uphold their duties to protect, respect, and fulfil human rights. Especially in the event of a crisis, the State remains responsible for protecting those in need, maintaining the rule of law and protecting the fundamental human rights of anyone under its territorial control. Other States should be prepared to ensure human rights are respected and protected and where they are not or where they are at risk, be prepared to act. **The provision of humanitarian aid is but one of a number of powerful instruments to protect people in crises and the unfettered delivery of and access to assistance should be a key principle that the government would strive for in supporting humanitarian responses.**

### ***Recognising starvation of civilians as a method of warfare***

UN Security Council Resolution 2417, condemning the starvation of civilians as a method of warfare and the unlawful denial of humanitarian access to civilian populations, is a landmark agreement, drawing attention to the link between armed conflict and conflict-induced food insecurity, famine and forced displacement.

The UN Security Council has recognised the importance of safe and unimpeded access of humanitarian personnel to civilians in armed conflicts, and condemned the

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<sup>16</sup> <http://www.unhcr.org/en-ie/protection/idps/43ce1cff2/guiding-principles-internal-displacement.html>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2018/>

instrumentalisation of aid and conflict-induced food insecurity. **Irish Aid should continue to prioritise the right to food and to an adequate standard of living.** Recognising that access to food is manipulated in some conflict contexts, the new International Development Policy should commit Ireland to ensuring that Resolution 2417 is implemented in a way that reduces the use of starvation as a weapon of war and punishes those who seek to do this.

### ***Women, Peace and Security***

While Ireland is making some progress on the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, greater engagement across government and between Ireland and the wider international community is necessary. The implementation of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda globally lacks ambition and the necessary urgency to prevent conflict, promote inclusive peace, women's rights and participation.

**Too much money is spent on arms and military security, and too little on gender equality and women's meaningful participation**<sup>18</sup>. The approach to security is built on the belief that military action, or the threat of it, can solve problems and conflicts, and that human security is dependent on weapons. This 'traditional' security approach has been proven to create adverse economic and political consequences that do not reduce conflict but rather increase injustice and inequality, causing great suffering and distress.

Dedicated resourcing for WPS, especially for civil society engagement, is limited. States continue to invest in militarised state security, which exacerbates violence, including sexual and gender based violence, rather than human security based on women's experiences. In 2016, there was a global military spend of \$1.686 trillion<sup>19</sup>, (a 0.4% increase on 2015), while gender equality and peace remain drastically under-funded.

Ireland's commitment to WPS<sup>20</sup> is evident in the Irish National Action Plan that aims to strengthen policy coherence across Government. The plan recognises the hardship faced by women in conflict, and as refugees, and the reality of the challenges of the direct provision model in Ireland for women and girls.

Valuable lessons from the two previous action plans should be incorporated into the new International Development Policy. **The Irish Government must also commit to greater**

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<sup>18</sup> <http://www.peacewomen.org/why-WPS/the-problem>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2016/world-military-spending-resumes-upward-course-says-sipri>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.dfa.ie/media/dfa/alldfawebstimedia/ourrolesandpolicies/ourwork/empoweringwomen-peaceandsecurity/Irelands-second-National-Action-Plan-on-Women-Peace-and-Security.pdf>

**funding for WPS initiatives and advocate with other Member States to adequately fund their national action plans<sup>21</sup>.**

### ***Humanitarian Protection***

Protection encompasses all activities aimed at ensuring full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the relevant bodies of law (i.e. human rights law, international humanitarian law and refugee law)<sup>22</sup>.

The principle of humanity – that all people must be treated humanely in all circumstances – remains fundamental to effective protection work, placing the individual at risk at the centre of protection efforts. It demands that priority be given to protecting life and health, alleviating suffering, and ensuring respect for the rights, dignity and mental and physical integrity of all individuals in situations of risk.

We recommend that the new International Development Policy articulate the strategic focus of Ireland's protection work. Ireland is a significant player in GBV response in emergencies and is well placed to influence delivery of quality life-saving protection programming, including GBV, mental health and psychosocial support, from the earliest stages of emergencies. **It is of critical importance that the new International Development Policy makes explicit reference to the protection of women, girls and at-risk groups, who are disproportionately affected by violence.**

### ***Reaching the furthest behind first***

**'Leaving no one behind' means ending extreme poverty in all its forms.** Key to 'leaving no one behind' is prioritisation and fast-tracking of actions for the poorest and most marginalised people – known as progressive universalism<sup>23</sup>. If, instead, policy is implemented among better-off groups first, and worst-off groups later, the existing gap between them is likely to increase.

Food, water, shelter, health and education are essential in supporting communities in the aftermath of a crisis. In protracted crises, humanitarian actors do what is possible and not always what is necessary. As crises become protracted, funding to maintain minimum services becomes a challenge, and humanitarian actors often leave with no 'development'

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<sup>21</sup> [74 UN Member States](#) (38% of all UN Member States) have UNSCR 1325 National Action Plans (NAPs) and of those only 17 (23%) include an [allocated budget](#) for implementation in the NAP upon its release. (<http://www.peacewomen.org/member-states>)

<sup>22</sup> This is the standard definition of protection which is endorsed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.odi.org/publications/10956-defining-leave-no-one-behind>

supports or opportunities in place. Political interest wanes, budgets are reduced and reallocated to 'newer' crises, and the affected populations are left even further behind. Neglected or forgotten crises receive little humanitarian funding. Development actors have an important role to play by engaging in early recovery programming. Flexible and sustained funding is necessary to rebuild communities in post-emergency settings.

Inequality is a growing risk to progress and stability across the globe. **Long-term investment in essential services and gender equality are essential investments to support a country to move away from the social and economic instability that undermines good governance.**

### ***Educating the future***

Education is crucial for building the resilience of crisis affected children, providing protection, literacy, social development and the opportunity to break the cycle of vulnerability. However, with some 75 million children aged 3-18 out of school in 35 crisis affected countries, access to education is clearly not a reality for all. Given the long-term realities of displacement today, where families will remain displaced for an average of 20 years,<sup>24</sup> with interrupted or periodic access to formal and non-formal education in protracted crises, we would encourage a deepening of Irish Aid's priority focus on education. **With just 2% of humanitarian aid allocated to education, the new International Development Policy must recognise the importance of adequately resourced education programming in humanitarian response.**

#### **4. How can we improve delivery of Ireland's international development cooperation and humanitarian action?**

Development in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century must be based on principled engagement, recognising the complexity of contexts and the moral responsibility to do everything possible to reach those furthest behind.

- **The new International Development Policy must clearly articulate the need for greater investment in conflict prevention and commit to supporting efforts to promote peace and reconciliation, and support development priorities ahead of national interests.**

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<sup>24</sup> [https://www.icrc.org/en/download/file/72694/irrc\\_99.pdf](https://www.icrc.org/en/download/file/72694/irrc_99.pdf)

Ireland must now reach the bar set for global sustainable development, building on the success and global recognition of Ireland's leadership on the SDGs and the New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants.

The ambition to secure a Security Council non-permanent seat in 2021 is laudable and, if successful, would provide Ireland with an influential platform. With a myriad of issues to tackle, Ireland should focus on issues that directly contribute to and perpetuate humanitarian crises – armed conflict over territory and natural resources; ethnically driven conflict; the protection of children; and recognition and support of women and girls.

### ***Accountability***

**Accountability to communities and people affected by crises must sit at the centre of Ireland's International Development Policy.** Irish Aid supports key humanitarian performance standards including Sphere and the Core Humanitarian Standard<sup>25</sup> which seek to enhance professionalism among humanitarian actors. This is also an opportunity for Ireland to support greater professionalism through endorsement of support to other similar initiatives, notably the Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action<sup>26</sup>. Continued efforts are necessary to improve accountability to affected populations and to the Irish people on the priorities and modalities of delivery of humanitarian assistance.

Ireland's partners in principled humanitarian action work directly with communities coping with or vulnerable to crises. Either by direct implementation or in solidarity and partnership with national NGO partners, humanitarian actors are accountable to those who contribute to and support humanitarian aid. They can be a strong and respected voice, and through that voice give visibility to the needs and rights of those affected by crises and to highlight the value of the support provided by the tax-payer and Ireland's reputation as a committed and principled donor.

Accountability to people affected by crises goes beyond assistance alone. When international law is violated, when civilians and those who protect and support them in conflict are attacked, perpetrators enabled by silence and inaction and impunity is strengthened.

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<sup>25</sup> <https://corehumanitarianstandard.org/the-standard/statements-of-support>

<sup>26</sup> <https://humanitariananddisabilitycharter.org/wp-content/themes/humanitarian-disability-charter.org/pdf/charter-on-inclusion-of-persons-with-disabilities-in-humanitarian-action.pdf>

- **Ireland’s International Development Policy should clearly articulate a commitment to call violators of international humanitarian law to account. The government should strengthen its voice at international forums to advocate for the recognition and fulfilment of IHL and human rights, and for violators of these to be held to account<sup>27</sup>.**

### ***The European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid***

The European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid remains an important point of reference. It demonstrates the EU Member States’ commitment to the fundamental humanitarian principles and creates a common and unbiased framework to support the delivery of humanitarian aid. The Consensus is the foundation of a strong EU humanitarian architecture which includes: a specific article in the Lisbon Treaty; the establishment of the Council Working Group on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid (COHAFA); a Standing Rapporteur in the European Parliament; and a Commissioner portfolio.

**The Consensus should be central to the new International Development Policy.** Its core elements are not only central to ensuring coordination, accountability and needs-based humanitarian aid, but it must also be instrumental in Ireland’s commitment to ensuring that humanitarian aid remains distinct from political objectives of the EU's external action and internal interests.

### ***Gender equality***

Gender equality is not only a basic human right, but its achievement has enormous socio-economic ramifications, unlocking potential for girls, boys, women and men. Deepening our understanding of the gendered impacts of poverty, inequality, climate change and conflict will be critical for inclusion and ensuring that women and girls are not left behind. The new International Development Policy should elaborate on how Ireland’s foreign policy will positively contribute to increasing women’s choices and capabilities, give women an equal voice and end violence against women. Transforming gender relations also involves a focus on boys, men and masculinities.

- **All humanitarian actors must redouble efforts to integrate gender across all interventions supported by Ireland, alongside targeted efforts focussing on the education of girls, access to health, WPS and GBV.**

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<sup>27</sup> ‘Humanity First: A vision for a More Peaceful, Equal and Just Global Society’ – Written Submission on behalf of peace and conflict experts to the consultation process (Submitted by Dr. Caitriona Dowd)

### ***Adapting funding mechanisms to the reality of humanitarian crises***

Given the scale of humanitarian crises currently facing the world, a significant increase in the proportion of ODA must be dedicated to humanitarian action. Progress towards 0.7% requires gradual and consistent investment in systems to increase humanitarian response capacity and deliver humanitarian assistance in a transparent and accountable way. As key humanitarian actors, Irish NGOs should be considered as key partners of Irish Aid, and funding allocations should reflect this.

Multi-annual and flexible funding reflects the reality of delivering assistance in humanitarian settings. NGOs and communities are the first responders in a crises and the central role of these actors in humanitarian response must be recognised.

- **Funding should be available to ensure consistent investment in standards and principles, including adequate safeguarding mechanisms to deliver high quality responses in increasingly complex and expensive operating environments.**

### ***Support humanitarian assistance that is as local as possible and as international as necessary***

International and national NGOs play a crucial role in humanitarian action. They work with communities to identify and respond to needs. This proximity to communities is an assurance that Ireland's aid reaches those who need it most in an accountable and transparent way.

The new International Development Policy should recognise the principle of subsidiarity to frame its approach to localisation, participation and partnerships. Subsidiarity in humanitarian response means recognising that local populations, including women's organisations, can and should be best placed to make decisions and take action. It also means that the humanitarian system should be designed to support localisation principles in the first instance and is supposed to take action and make decisions at a higher level when this can be justified by a humanitarian imperative and the exigencies of the context.

## **Diplomatic engagement and humanitarian diplomacy**

The multi-dimensional nature of crises combine economic and environmental factors, political challenges and security threats and requires a more consistent level of engagement at mission level to reinforce or support contributions to humanitarian action. Ireland's diplomatic influence is greatly enhanced by skilled advisers engaged at regional and country-level in crisis contexts. In humanitarian settings, increased high-level engagement by humanitarian advisers provides oversight, accountability and expertise.

- **The new International Development Policy should place greater emphasis on humanitarian diplomacy and commit to increasing the number of humanitarian staff at embassy level, especially in conflict contexts.**