



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**

Dóchas Livelihoods, Food and Nutrition Security Working Group

- Nature of views: **Organisational**
- Organisation (if applicable): **Dóchas - Livelihoods, Food and Nutrition Security Working Group (DFNSL)**

Concern Worldwide; GOAL; Self Help Africa; Misean Cara; Nurture Africa; Trócaire; Proudly Made in Africa; Vita; World Vision Ireland.
- Role in organisation (if applicable): **Working group**
- Postal address: **Suite 8 Olympic House, Pleasants St, Dublin 8**
- Web-address: <https://dochas.ie/publications/livelihoods-food-nutrition-security-working-group-tor>
- Email: programme@dochas.ie
- Freedom of Information: **This submission may be released in total under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Acts.**
- Daytime telephone number: **01 4053801**
- Date of posting response: **22 August 2018**

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

The new policy should be rooted in well-established values of coherence, sustainability, and human rights. It should reflect our national and international experience in agriculture, education, sanitation, health and nutrition.

The policy should be informed by the Irish successes in the fight against Ebola and the HIV epidemic, agricultural transformation, and Ireland's focus on sustainably reducing hunger.

The new policy should continue to prioritise efforts to reduce chronic malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies.

The policy should also be informed by Ireland's strong multilateral engagement at EU and UN level, and the lessons from the Northern Ireland peace process.

The policy should have a continued focus on: results-based work; gender equality; social protection; knowledge and technology transfer; climate resilient agriculture (or similar approach); improved credit access; local markets and the promotion of value chains that provide the greatest returns to the producer; and investment and business knowledge.

Ireland's own experience with Irish agri-food sector and trade growth should be leveraged while ensuring private sector engagement is environmentally sustainable, is focussed on the poorest as the primary beneficiaries and has a nutrition sensitive lens.

Irish Aid's flexible funding approach facilitates strategic investment in systems long enough to achieve learning, development of new approaches and system strengthening. The new policy should continue with this approach to foster innovation and learning.

The new policy should continue to focus on "leaving no one behind" but also working with and reaching those furthest behind – the extreme poor.

It is important that private sector engagement initiatives, particularly with the agri-food industry, are climate resilient and focused on improving nutrition.

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

The global context is rapidly evolving.

After a prolonged decline, **world hunger is on the rise again**. Conflict, drought and disasters linked to climate change are among the key factors causing this reversal in the long-term progress in fighting global hunger, making the prospect of ending hunger and malnutrition by 2030 more difficult.

Globally, **extreme poverty** has been on a downward trajectory in recent decades¹. The most recent report from the UN Secretary General on the Sustainable Development Goals however revealed that, after a period of decline, the **number of hungry people in the world is once again on the rise**, increasing from 777 million people (10.52% of the global population) in 2015 to 815 million (10.92%) in 2016². The latest estimate on global poverty (2013) is that almost 11% of the world's population, or 783 million people, were living below the international poverty line of US\$1.90 per day³. Significantly, over half of these people live in Sub-Saharan Africa, with approximately one-third living in Southern Asia.

While also declining globally, **stunting still affected 22% of children under five** (151 million) in 2017. Three quarters of these children lived in Southern Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa where the rate of stunting is increasing rather than decreasing. In 2017, **51 million children under five suffered from wasting** and **38 million were affected by obesity**⁴. The double and even triple burden of malnutrition (chronic & acute malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies) in developing countries will coincide with an increased prevalence of non-communicable diseases and put further strain on already over-stretched health systems.

The effects of climate change have a greater impact on developing countries in the South. The impact of climate change has undermined the development progress of these countries as well as intensified inequality within the countries. **With rapid population growth comes the increased movement of people**, in particular the movement of youth into urban settings. This creates a new set of challenges but also opportunities for achieving livelihoods and food and nutrition security. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) state that

¹ <http://worldpoverty.io/>

² https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/18541SG_SDG_Progress_Report_2018_ECOSOC.pdf

³ <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/overview>

⁴ <http://www.who.int/gho/child-malnutrition/en/>

in countries with rapid population growth and limited prospects for industrialization, creating jobs for youth will require a dynamic growth of decent employment in on-farm and off-farm activities, such as food processing, services and agri-tourism⁵. The growing humanitarian needs in the Middle East and Africa resulting from conflict and extreme weather patterns, are also contributing to the increased movement of people, in particular they are fuelling the exponential growth in migration to the Global North and affecting political stability in Europe.

The slow progress to **gender equality** is still an issue even in light of the enormous socioeconomic benefits of women's full and equal participation in society. Advances in technology and communications can drive gender equality but only sufficient political will can create a conducive environment for women's full and equal participation. The Paris Climate Accord, the SDGs and other policy frameworks noted in Irish Aid's Public Consultation paper are a step in the right direction in this regard.

The Global downturn saw a decrease in funding to UN agencies and other international organisations and NGO's. With the global economy rebounding, it is expected that funding to these organisations will be restored therefore increasing their capacity to meet the SDGs by 2030⁶.

However, Brexit⁷ and increasing protectionist policies in the USA will have a negative effect on reaching the SDG goals. Understanding the complex challenges and how they interact in the environments we work in will be critical in understanding where and how to work to achieve impact.

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?

It is good to see that the priorities in 'Transforming Our World' are framed by the SDG's and their call to '**Leave No One Behind**'.

DFNSL welcomes the Irish government's key priority in the new Global Ireland programme, to grow Official Development Assistance (ODA) from 0.3% to the United Nations target of 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) in ODA by 2030 – the year by which the world has

⁵ FAO 'The State of Food and Agriculture 2017 – Leveraging Food Systems for Inclusive Rural Transformation.'

⁶ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/financing/ffdforum-opens-2018.html>

⁷ <https://www.odi.org/publications/10480-brexit-and-development-how-will-developing-countries-be-affected>

pledged to deliver on our Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). DFNSL supports Dóchas' call on the government to publish a clear roadmap to reaching this target by 2025.

DFNSL agrees with the five "Priorities for Transformation": 'Leave No One Behind'; gender equality; reducing humanitarian need; climate action and governance.

We support inclusive economic growth provided it is climate-sensitive and reflected by the Irish government's commitment to the fair use of natural resources both at home and internationally. New initiatives to leverage private sector partnerships while promoting environmentally sustainable approaches are welcome. In relation to private sector initiatives, it is important that due diligence and human rights obligations be monitored. We encourage working with and reaching those furthest behind first, by allocating more resources to the most excluded and hardest to reach groups such as indigenous peoples, the elderly, people with disabilities and other marginalized groups. The new policy should recognize that these groups have knowledge and skills that can be utilised and acknowledge that these groups have the smallest carbon print.

Although Irish Aid has renewed its commitment to reducing malnutrition, it should be recognised that nutrition security is dependant not just on economic and food security but also, on strong health and environmental health systems and achieving social behaviour change.

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

We can improve delivery of Ireland's international development cooperation and humanitarian action by supporting efforts that promote **gender equality** and inclusion to unlock the potential of both genders, but especially women and girls.

Ireland's term on the UN Commission on the Status of Women can result in progress towards gender equality. The vision of 'leaving no one behind' cannot be achieved without the empowerment of women and girls. Closing the gender gap should be central to any rural growth and employment creation agenda. Women smallholders comprise an average of 43% of the agricultural labour force of developing countries (50% in sub-Saharan Africa). 79% of these women identify agriculture as their primary economic activity⁸. Yet, despite many communities' dependence on women to grow food, women often lack access to productive

⁸ FAO 'The State of Food and Agriculture: Women in Agriculture, Closing the Gender Gap for Development.'

assets such as land and services, like extension services, credit and quality inputs, that can enhance farm productivity and household incomes. For example, women receive less than 10% of all credit going to smallholder farmers. Women farmers could grow 30% more food if they have access to the same resources as their male counterparts: by helping women farmers boost production, we could reduce global hunger by 150 million people and countries could see an increase of up to 4% in agricultural output⁹. Women do much of the agricultural labour, their full inclusion is necessary for change. Agricultural transformation can only happen if it promotes practices that reduce or share the workload on small-scale farms.

We can improve delivery of Ireland's international development cooperation and humanitarian action by investing in initiatives that **reduce post-harvest food waste and spoilage**. We can reduce waste through improved storage, preservation, computer technology (such as "Blockchain"), and improved access to credit and markets. An estimated 25% of the world's food calories and up to 50 percent of total food weight are lost or wasted before they can be consumed¹⁰.

DFNSL agrees that there needs to be a clear and stronger focus on **climate action through a climate justice lens**. There needs to be more climate mitigation (reduction of Green House Gas emissions) in the so-called developed North and increased climate finance for adaptation in the so-called developing South. Climate marker results from projects in the Global South are also counted as Ireland's contribution to reducing the Irish carbon footprint (OECD Rio Climate markers)¹¹. This strong climate justice lens should extend across all government departments so that policies of all departments are coherent and are complementary to climate action rather than contradictory. It is particularly important for the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment and the Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine to show policy coherence in accordance with Ireland's SDG commitments and climate obligations.

Irish Aid has been proactive in assisting farmers to adapt to the impacts of climate change with an excellent web portal, climate risk analysis for all Irish Aid focus countries and funding for climate related research. **Ireland should maintain a strategic strength in climate resilient agriculture or similar approach.**

⁹ FAO 'The State of Food and Agriculture: Women in Agriculture, Closing the Gender Gap for Development.'

¹⁰ Jonathan Foley 'Five Step Plan to Feed the World' <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/foodfeatures/feeding-9-billion/>

¹¹ https://www.oecd.org/dac/environment-development/Revised%20climate%20marker%20handbook_FINAL.pdf

The close relationship between agriculture and the environment means that increasing productivity is only sustainable if we do it in a way that prevents environmental degradation, reduces polluting emissions, and promotes effective natural resource management and resilience to shocks such as the impact of climate change.

DFNSL agrees that investment in agriculture is an effective way to reduce extreme poverty and improve nutrition, particularly in marginalised and hard to reach areas. Agribusiness can be further developed in this light. For example, in Africa, agri-businesses account for more than 30% of national incomes as well as the bulk of export revenues and national employment. The sector is currently worth about \$313 billion, and already provides jobs for 70% of the poorest¹². Strengthening targeted investments in agri-business has the potential to generate sustained income flows and prosperous livelihoods in both rural and urban areas.

With the right investments, food and agricultural enterprises can add value to and increase demand for farm outputs. This has the potential to drive growth of smallholder agriculture, thereby contributing to poverty reduction and food security and nutrition in rural areas. They provide employment opportunities in off-farm activities, such as handling, processing, packaging, storage, transportation and marketing of food and non-food agricultural products. Providing support to the development of cooperatives and producer organisations, for-profit market brokering services, innovative use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) such as “Blockchain”, development of agricultural insurance schemes and risk management products.

We can improve delivery of Ireland’s international development cooperation and humanitarian action by supporting efforts that recognise **social protection** as an important policy instrument to reduce extreme poverty. Ending poverty requires universal social protection systems aimed at protecting all people throughout their life cycle, and targeted measures to reduce vulnerability to disasters and address specific geographical areas within a country.

Unconditional Cash transfers or guaranteed labour schemes provide a basic income, for the poorest in rural and urban areas, enabling them to invest time in their own farms rather than working as labourers on other farms. Guaranteed labour schemes provide alternative income opportunities for the landless. It has led to an increase in agriculture labour rates in

¹² Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade and Defence Review of the Irish Aid Programme February 2018

India. Cash transfers enable the poor to buy their own farm inputs, increasing choice and supporting the agriculture input supply chain, and are more efficient than fertiliser subsidies.

Cash transfers provide a safety net for innovative farmers and for those who wish to retrain and join another sector. In any job creation initiative, women and youth should be placed at the centre of agricultural investment strategies.

The commitment to **public awareness and ownership** of the development programme is critical. Public engagement should emphasise the interconnectedness of global issues (poverty, migration, conflict, fragility etc.) and how these are relevant to the Irish people and work to address them should be an integral part of how the Irish government is helping shape a world that is better for everyone.

Innovation by development actors plays a role in achieving sustainable development and poverty reduction. If Ireland wants to strengthen its leadership role in development and improve aid delivery, it has to encourage innovative approaches and allocate resources to incentivise experimentation and implementation of selected innovative approaches. In working towards agricultural transformation, innovation could be developed at local levels based on participatory platforms that bring the best of small-scale farmers and scientific knowledge together.

Recommendations:

In summary, the DFNSL call on Ireland's new international development policy to:

1. **Have a strong focus on gender equality and inclusion.** Closing the gender gap should be central to any agriculture, rural development and economic development programmes.
2. **Have a clear and stronger focus on climate action through a climate justice lens.** Ireland should develop a leadership role among countries in the Global North by making stronger climate mitigation efforts and increasing support for climate adaptation in the Global South. **Policy coherence** between all Irish government departments, including Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment and the Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine is central to this.
3. **Maintain a strategic strength in climate resilient agriculture** or similar approach.

4. **Promote agriculture using a nutrition sensitive lens**, ensuring the promotion and production of quality, nutrition rich, and diverse foods are maintained to address chronic hunger and malnutrition.
5. **Develop a targeted mechanism for investment in agri-business** as a way of reducing extreme poverty and improve nutrition, particularly in marginalised and hard to reach areas. Investments made should have the potential to drive the growth of small-scale / smallholder agriculture and rural agri-food industries to create significant rural employment. This investment should also include more support to the development of cooperatives and producer organisations, for-profit market brokering services, innovative use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) such as “Blockchain”, development of agricultural insurance schemes and risk management products.
6. **Invest in initiatives that reduce post-harvest food waste and spoilage** as a means of improving food security. Initiatives could include improved storage, preservation, computer technology (such as “Blockchain”), and improved access to credit and markets.
7. **Support efforts that recognise social protection** as an important policy instrument to reduce extreme poverty.
8. **Allocate resources to incentivise development and piloting of innovative approaches to tackle priority development issues and promote sustainable development.**
9. **Continue to support international agriculture research** and support new partnerships with Irish academic and research institutions in order to drive sustainable growth of the local food industry and build markets for local produce.