Dóchas discussion paper

Eliminating Global Hunger: Towards a Strategic Irish Response

September 2010
Executive Summary

Poverty is the main cause of chronic hunger, with the inverse also being true - hunger traps people in poverty. When people are hungry, they are often in bad health, their children cannot concentrate in school and they lack the energy to lead productive lives.

Hunger can be eradicated. The first of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) calls for the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger by halving the number of people who suffer from hunger by 2015. Some progress has been made, but it has been uneven, leaving many vulnerable groups in poor countries facing chronic hunger.

Ireland's history of development assistance and its experience with population-devastating famine some 150 years ago motivates the country to take a leadership role in the area of hunger eradication, both at policy and programming levels. This discussion paper aims to highlight issues surrounding the elimination of hunger, from an Irish perspective.

This paper serves to highlight key areas for immediate and medium-term policy dialogue, and potential practice engagement between Irish Aid and Irish NGOs. Dóchas members hope that such dialogue may result in joint or complementary engagement (as appropriate) between the Irish government, including Irish Aid, and Irish NGOs to promote issues or mechanisms in the current global hunger architecture in areas where there is consensus to advance progress in tackling global hunger.

It is also hoped that dialogue would help clarify issues and positions in those areas where there is a lack of consensus, or even contention. Ultimately, it is hoped, that such dialogue can stimulate or enhance policies and practices by Irish development actors that help achieve tangible progress towards sustained hunger alleviation at a global level.

The Hunger Task Force Report to the Government of Ireland (HTF), commissioned by the Government, is Ireland’s flagship document relating to current hunger alleviation policy and practice in developing countries. The document was compiled in 2008, with the HTF members comprising government representatives, international development experts and Irish civil society representatives. The document signifies Ireland's commitment to eliminating global hunger and to providing leadership on this issue within Europe and at wider international level.

The Hunger Task Force recommendations focus on addressing three key priorities:

- Increasing the productivity of smallholder, mainly women, farmers in Africa
- Implementing programmes focused on maternal and infant undernutrition, and
  Ensuring real political commitment, at national and international levels, to give hunger the
  absolute priority it deserves.

Irish NGOs welcome the priority afforded to tackling global hunger in Irish development priorities, and in Government policy more widely. They welcome the progress made in advancing that agenda at Irish Aid programme level and at international level, while also identifying (in this paper) potential areas for further advancement. Importantly, they feel that progress would be enhanced through discussion on a shared action plan for implementation of common HTF priority issues.

Recommendations

This paper sets out a number of areas that NGOs consider are worth further exploration between themselves and Irish Aid in the first instance – and potentially with other Government Departments, depending on particular issues, events and opportunities.

In relation to policy matters, Dóchas members see merit in:

1. More structured and constructive dialogue between Irish Aid (in particular, the Hunger Unit) and Irish NGOs (in particular through the Food Security and Livelihoods Working Group of Dóchas, or smaller task/policy teams depending on the matters arising);
2. Exploring identification of a limited number of policy priorities, as identified in the HTF report or that have emerged since, around which a common Irish agenda for progress might be built;

3. Considering an Irish Aid priority country as a focal point for Irish Aid and Irish NGOs jointly taking forward some specific policy development that could give rise to new/innovative/best practice in a specific area of work that would complement the HTF recommendations;

4. Seeking to enhance Ireland’s transparency on Government/Department positions in certain key areas for tackling global hunger, such as:
   - Reform of the global hunger architecture;
   - Increased investment for agriculture and food & nutrition security (FNS);
   - Best practice research;
   - The Irish and EU trade agendas; and,
   - Accounting for the 20% spending towards FNS goals, as recommended in the HTF report and accepted by Government.

In relation to practice, Dóchas members see merit in:

1. Exploring the potential for enhanced and predictable dialogue on FNS between Irish Aid (particularly the Hunger Unit) and Irish NGOs (particularly through the Food Security and Livelihoods Working Group of Dóchas, or smaller task/policy teams depending on the matters arising). One suggestion is to explore the utility and feasibility of regular teleconferences between the Hunger Unit in Irish Aid and key members of Irish NGOs;

2. Exploring the possibility of collaborative or shared research project, in Ireland and/or partner countries, in the areas of food and agriculture. These might include, for example, research into large-scale land investments in developing countries, or effective scaling up of nutrition interventions;

3. Systematic and specific attention to issues of particular vulnerability and inclusion (including, for example, persons with disability) in all FNS programmes;

Recommendations for Irish NGOs

This analysis of the response to the growing global hunger crisis, both domestically and internationally, also results in several recommendations for Irish NGOs to consider. It suggests the need to identify a few key points on policy and programming they would like to advance with Irish Aid, as a key development partner; finalise (or, where absent develop) internal policy documents regarding FNS, and make those available widely to best enhance engagement with other NGOs as well as with Irish Aid; identify programmes in strategic partner countries that may be suitable for collaborative research with Irish Aid in order to establish best practice for helping to address FNS issues in developing countries.

Amid increased hunger and food price uncertainty (due, in part, to global warming) the 10-year review of the MDGs Summit in September – as well as the anticipated progress report to the Irish Government regarding the implementation of the Hunger Task Force recommendations – it is clear that significant momentum has been achieved in and by Ireland on tackling global food and nutrition insecurity issues.

Detailed discussion between Irish NGOs and Irish Aid, especially the Hunger Unit, can help map out how, and to what extent they can work.
1. Introduction

Progress towards the Millennium Development Goals differs across countries and across the MDGs themselves. Poverty is complex and multidimensional, informed by specific economic, political and institutional contexts at local, national and regional levels. Eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, MDG 1, has seen admirable progress achieved in many parts of the world. For example, the Global Hunger Index notes that since 1990 Southeast Asia, the Near East, North Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean have reduced hunger significantly1.

However, vulnerable groups in some of the world's most vulnerable countries have experienced severe setbacks regarding the alleviation of extreme hunger in recent years due to a variety of inter-related reasons. In fact, for many severely hungry people material improvement with regards to MDG 1 continues to remain frustratingly elusive. For example, in South Asia progress has been slow, and in Sub-Saharan Africa it has been marginal2. This, in part, as a result of their distance from the global effort to alleviate extreme suffering, as characterised by the MDGs.

Ireland's history of development assistance and its experience with population-devastating famine in the nineteenth century gives it the ambition to be a global leader in the area of hunger alleviation, both at policy and programming levels. At government and civil society level, Ireland has a long tradition of working with vulnerable groups in order to alleviate hunger. Recent years have seen moves towards formalising these into concrete strategic objectives, as well as developing implementable action plans.

This document undertakes a brief examination of the global context informing the recent increase in those suffering from extreme hunger, as well as the response to this increase from development stakeholders. Following this, it sketches Ireland's recent work on hunger, both by Irish Aid (IA) and Irish development NGOs, in an effort to identify issues and challenges in the global hunger architecture where Ireland can make a positive strategic contribution to progressive action.

This involves a brief analysis of the policies and programmes formulated by Irish Aid and Irish NGOs with regard to hunger alleviation to date, in order to establish areas of policy and programme consensus and contention, whether between Ireland and the global community or, within Ireland, between Irish Aid and NGOs.

This analysis serves to highlight key areas for immediate and medium-term policy dialogue and practice engagement between IA and Irish development NGOs. The dialogue that Dóchas hopes will result should aim to promote the current global hunger architecture, in areas of consensus, while challenging strategic reform in areas of contention. Ultimately, it is hoped, such dialogue will stimulate increased implementation of policy and practice to begin achieving tangible progress towards sustained hunger alleviation.

2. The global landscape of hunger

Since 2005, the number of under-nourished people in the developing world has increased by over 150 million to one billion people, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) estimates. Between 1990 and 2008, all regions experienced decreases in the proportion of people facing severe food shortages. However absolute numbers have risen, especially in parts of sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and south Asia (SA)3.

Details on food and nutrition insecurity at a regional level can be tracked on the FAO’s site4, while the annual State of Food Security in the World report gives detailed information on issues of particular relevance as the global FNS context changes continuously5.

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1 Welthungerhilfe, Concern Worldwide, IFPRI: Global Hunger Index 2009.
2 Welthungerhilfe, Concern Worldwide, IFPRI: Global Hunger Index 2009.
3 This is one of key criticisms of the MDGs, progress towards MDGs can be reached via population growth even where absolute numbers of the poor and hungry remain the same.
4 http://www.fao.org/hunger/en
5 FAO 2009: ‘More people than ever are victims of hunger.’ Press release
Fragile states are particularly vulnerable to the recent events that have precipitated this increase in the number of the world’s hungry. Similarly, certain population groups (such as people with disabilities, people living with HIV or AIDS, widows, orphans etc) are especially vulnerable to food and nutrition insecurity.

The UN estimates that the global population will increase to 9.1 billion by 2050. This population growth, compounded by broad income increases, will result in a 70% increase in the demand for food globally. The negative effects of climate change (erratic and reduced rainfall as well as increased temperatures) are likely to be felt most acutely in SSA where most food production is from rain fed crops that have not seen significant advances in pest-resistance or yield improvements over recent decades.

Grain market distortions are also probable given the demand for bio-fuels, as developed countries attempt to mitigate the effects of climate change via fuel diversification.

Large-scale land investments further aggravate issues around insecurity of land tenure that often characterise the resource access constraints faced by food and nutrition insecure groups, especially in rural contexts. Although relatively little is known about the exact nature and extent of large-scale land investments, the World Bank estimates that this is currently a significant factor challenging Food and Nutrition Security in some developing countries. There is also anecdotal evidence of large-scale bilateral investment accelerating in SSA and East Asia especially.

However, the probability of these large-scale land investments occurring diminishes with the strength of rural land rights. Strengthening land rights is a well recognised component of overall FNS, which suggests that efforts towards strengthening the establishment of land rights should be stepped up.

Development assistance interventions to alleviate hunger have often focussed on stabilising agricultural livelihoods. This provides the dual positive outcomes of sustainable poverty alleviation and food and nutrition security. However, FNS will increasingly become an urban problem as developing country populations move towards large cities in ever increasing numbers.

Programmes to assist the urban poor and the food insecure will need ongoing innovation to allow the introduction of interventions appropriate to the vulnerable groups in these areas. Livelihood programmes will remain an important FNS tool in urban areas, but employment generation and sustainable outcomes will be somewhat different to those in rural settings.

Finally the recent global economic downturn has had serious negative effects for FNS. These are likely to continue for some time. Figures 1, 2 and 3 trace the import, export and fuel prices faced by African countries since 2000. Although fuel and import prices have dropped from their 2008 levels, they have not returned to pre-crisis levels and are not forecast to do so before the end of 2011. Similarly, export prices for raw agricultural goods have also fallen, and their pre-crisis growth paths are not set to resume prior to 2011.

These have implications for affordability of food and fuel imports in a climate of permanently increased food prices and stagnating agricultural export prices. More widely, the economic crisis affects FNS through trade channels, employment, foreign direct investment, remittances and the finance gap between country needs and declining Official Development Assistance (ODA) levels.

Table 1 and Figure 5 at the end of the document illustrate the growth rates for SSA’s low income countries between 1990 and 2007. Significantly higher growth rates will be required to raise the income levels of the vulnerable groups in these countries to a level that will allow them to address their food and nutrition requirements adequately.

Although population growth and increasingly climate change and issues around the current economic downturn are well understood in the context of FNS, large-scale land acquisition and the importance
of appropriate land tenure rights is less well integrated into global FNS initiatives. Similarly, more understanding is needed as to the vulnerabilities faced by increasing populations of the urban food insecure, especially in the context of a global economic crisis (where employment insecurity and income reductions are important).

These may become key areas for international advocacy and national level capacity building in the near future, but research is needed into these issues and how they affect FNS outcomes before a response to these ongoing challenges can be appropriately mainstreamed into the global FNS architecture.

As population pressures and rural-urban migrations increase, the effects of climate change are felt, and as large-scale land-investments play out, pressure on food production resources may further entrench the position of today’s chronically hungry and increase the numbers of the world’s hungry further, unless decisive action is taken. However, increased demand for food can be met, and FNS achieved for all, with imaginative and implementable policy responses backed by real political will.12

3. Evolving international architecture to tackle hunger

Momentum around achieving sustainable food and nutrition security outcomes has been building for several years. Although many of the organisations involved have a long history in FNS, the food and fuel price crisis in 2008, at a time of unprecedented prosperity in developed countries, precipitated significant political will in this area. This political will has been successfully harnessed and developed into key policy and practice documents through a number of global initiatives, briefly outlined here.

However, implementation of several broadly agreed objectives has been frustratingly slow. This discussion paper hopes to progress the implementation of these objectives in Ireland’s partner countries and through national and international advocacy. Progress will require open and frank dialogue between all Irish stakeholders, followed urgently by sustainable practice and policy implementation.

Some measure of consensus has been achieved on many policy and strategic matters relating to advancing FNS. The global hunger architecture is still evolving as a result of parallel and merging processes, with broad but varying levels of consultation involving, among others, governments and donor groups, civil society organisations from developed and developing countries.

Governments and donors are represented in these initiatives, as well as multilateral organisations (World Bank, International Monetary Fund and multiple UN organisations, including the FAO, IFAD, WFP, etc.) while civil society input has come from NGOs, farmers groups, research institutions and the private sector. Some of the important steps in this evolving architecture are captured below:

- In 2004 the FAO, with broad support from its members, agreed on a set of Voluntary Guidelines in order to promote and support the realisation of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security.13 These have assisted in mainstreaming the ‘right to food’ approach which has been central to the development of the wider FNS architecture. The Guidelines are intended as a practical tool to assist countries in implementing the right to food at national level through legal, policy and institutional frameworks. They reflect a consensus among governments (not technical experts) on the meaning and implications of an economic right (the right to food). Ireland played a key role in the negotiations, particularly during the adoption phase in 2004 during Ireland’s presidency of the EU.

- Discussions on the Reform of the Committee on World Food Security were concluded in 2009.14 This is specifically intended to strengthen global and UN engagement with FNS issues. This document has been formulated within the context of wider UN reform. The reforms centre on movement towards policy coherence for development; facilitated,

12 FAO 2009: ‘How to feed the world by 2050’, Policy Document
coordinated advice and support to countries and regions; partnerships to share best practice between all relevant stakeholders and a promotion of accountability. The 36th CFS Plenary Session in October will specifically address the development of a global strategic framework for FNS.

- The UN’s High Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis produced a Comprehensive Framework for Action in 2008. This provided a key focus for many stakeholders. High levels of consensus around key objectives saw significant increases in development assistance investments, as well as crucial partnerships formed between donor and developing country institutions. This is currently being updated to reflect the evolving FNS context as well as to further inspire “coordinated action for the realisation of specific outcomes”.

- In 2009 the World Bank established the Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme to provide support to developing countries where significant gaps exist in the process of agricultural development and food security. This is specifically designed to assist implementation of the pledges made by donors at the L’Aquila summit.

- Scaling Up Nutrition: A Framework for Action (SUN) was formulated in 2010. This document sees support from many stakeholders (donors, governments, CSOs, academia) towards the mainstreaming of nutrition within the traditional food security architecture. This recognises the importance of addressing under-nutrition directly as well as nutrition sensitive food security policies and programmes in order to achieve sustainable progress towards eliminating hunger and extreme poverty.

The framework is founded on the demonstrated effectiveness of specific high impact nutrition interventions. The SUN outlines and supports 13 direct interventions that have been proven effective at addressing undernutrition, and which have also been costed by the World Bank.

- The Accra Agenda for Action signifies a deepening commitment by state actors and the donor community to achieve enhanced aid effectiveness as initially agreed through the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness in 2005. The aid effectiveness agenda, if fully pursued, offers the potential for significant progress achieved towards FNS.

- The European Union has contributed both financially and through policy and programme engagement with the global hunger agenda. The 2010 document, An EU policy framework to assist developing countries in addressing food security challenges, is a welcome and succinct addition to the global dialogue on FNS. This document lays out an evidence based approach to FNS along with policies towards crisis prevention and guidelines to maximise the effects of food security investments.

- Finally, the annual Global Hunger Index provides data on global hunger outcomes in developing countries. This series is an important part of the monitoring and evaluation toolkit available to states, donors and the wider CSO in order to establish the progress being made towards hunger alleviation globally.

4. Consensus, gaps and opportunities in tackling hunger

4.1 Areas of consensus

The global architecture is nuanced enough to recognise the multi-faceted nature of food and nutrition insecurity. There is wide cognisance that this insecurity is driven by different factors over time and across countries and regions. This provides impetus for real and strategic partnerships with all stakeholders in order to identify context appropriate policies and practices from the broader policy/programme mix.

17 This is an area in which Ireland appears a natural leader, for example Community Management of Acute Malnutrition interventions 18 High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness 2008: ‘Accra agenda for action’, Policy Document.
In relation to policy, there is growing agreement on the ‘right to food’ as the most appropriate framework within which FNS policy and practice should be formulated. This is in effect a commitment for all and an international legal obligation for those countries (including Ireland) who have ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and are thus bound to the progressive realisation of the right to adequate food\(^{20}\).

There is also wide consensus on the importance of a ‘twin track’ approach (mitigating current shocks as well as laying the foundations for long-term sustainable recovery) as well as growing agreement to incorporate a third pillar around governance and human rights.

The importance of nutrition sensitive programming and policies (focused on ‘diversified and sustainable diets’\(^{21}\)) is increasingly accepted. Scaling up Nutrition and other documents have been crucial to this end.

In relation to improving practice, the need to address the relative vulnerability of women and children is widely recognised. So too are the need for increased agricultural investment particularly targeted towards small holder farmers, as well as the immediate scaling up of access to food and safety nets for the hungry.

It is widely agreed that coordinated global governance is needed for progress towards FNS, though progress on real coordination at the global level remains slow, and this frustrates efforts at national and regional level to provide real leadership on partnerships and progress on implementation. For example, transparency and accountability regarding FNS development assistance financing has been slow to emerge, as has an agreement as to the hierarchy and inter-linkages of the various global hunger initiatives mentioned above.

There is broad consensus on the need for increased ‘Aid for Trade’ assistance, although there is some contention as to how exactly this should be provided, and whether it should substitute other forms of development assistance, especially in light of reduced overall aid budgets\(^{22}\). Likewise, there is wide recognition that significant development of local value chains and markets is needed. Broad consensus on the need for increased information, monitoring and analysis of global FNS has been reached, but again implementation of policy and practice to achieve this is developing only slowly.

### 4.2 Evident gaps

In relation to areas of contention, there has been a lack of coordinated food security assistance by national authorities in developing countries. The Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) in particular requires consistent support at the national level through enhanced monitoring, information access and research. Increased involvement of CSOs in developing countries could help mitigate these issues.

Producers and consumers also need to gain, or regain, a role in decision making processes, particularly in the case of women. This would involve recognising the requirement to invest in more resilient food system and to promote nutrition models that are not derived from western/European models.

The significant mobilisation of new investment funds for agriculture that is needed could be augmented by better linkages with other sectors (social protection, trade and nutrition) key to long-term FNS. There is increasing demand by CSOs that multilateral donor institutions take responsibility for policy prescriptions that have contributed to food and nutrition insecurity and wider vulnerability. This is a particularly contentious area.

The fact that wide acceptance of the implications of climate change for food insecure people has not precipitated agreement on appropriate biofuel policies is also a source of contention. The land competition between food, feed and fuel must be addressed urgently at policy and practice levels.

\(^{20}\) Arts. 2 and 11 of the covenant

\(^{21}\) UN Standing Committee on Nutrition: [http://www.unscn.org](http://www.unscn.org)

\(^{22}\) Trocaire 2009: ‘Implementing Aid for Trade to reduce poverty’, Briefing paper.
There is a lack of transparency and accountability of donors to funding pledges they have made in recent years and the delivery of such pledges, despite the availability of documents including a very practical guide from the FAO: Budget Work to Advance the Right to Food.\footnote{FAO 2009: \textit{How to feed the world by 2050}, Policy Document}

In practice, the definition of what would/should constitute food assistance and the most appropriate ways to roll out immediate food assistance, as well as safety nets and long-term development interventions, are yet to be widely agreed on, though most actors recognise that increased research and analysis of these practices is needed to inform future implementation. It is widely accepted that food assistance can have negative as well as positive impacts on local communities and livelihoods, for example, but clear understanding of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ food assistance is still lacking.

Targeted or universal; conditional or unconditional safety net provision is an area that needs further investigation before consensus can be reached. Similarly, research needs to be advanced on the interaction of FNS with access to resources, employment, urban-rural issues, land investment and climate change adaptation. There is also a need for more comprehensive vulnerability assessments at household level, and better understanding of the links – and differences – between rural and urban contexts. Although many donors agree on the need for policy coherence for development at national, regional and international levels, real implementation is not so forthcoming.

5. Recent Irish Government efforts to tackle global hunger

The Hunger Task Force Report to the Government of Ireland (HTF) is Ireland’s flagship document relating to current hunger alleviation policy and practice in developing countries. The document was compiled in 2008 with the HTF members comprising government representatives, international development experts and CSO representatives. The document signifies Ireland’s commitment to eliminating global hunger and providing leadership on this issue both within Europe and internationally.

There are three thematic areas that the HTF has prioritised for policy and programme implementation as well as global governance:

1. Increasing smallholder farming productivity, especially for women (who comprise the majority of smallholder agricultural producers in food insecure communities).
2. Reducing maternal and infant under-nutrition. (This reflects mainstreaming of nutrition within the over-arching food security framework.)
3. Increasing the political commitment and priority given to hunger. (This is crucial if real and sustainable progress towards FNS is to be achieved.)

The Irish Government has welcomed the document and accepted its recommendations. In this next section, some of the concrete steps taken in response to the recommendations are outlined, as are the mechanisms and resources that are currently in place to support implementation of the HTF’s recommendations, as far as they are known.

There are several important documents available that outline the Irish Government’s approach to tackling hunger, and/or its response to the recommendations of the Hunger Task Force.

They include: the White Paper on Irish Aid, which set a strategic vision for Ireland’s development cooperation programme, Irish Aid annual reports; Building Good Governance For Development Cooperation: Policy Orientations For Irish Aid (2009); the Irish Aid Civil Society Policy (2008); Irish Aid Management Review (2009); Policy Coherence For Development – A Report to the Advisory Board of Irish Aid (2009); and the Accra Agenda for Action, which sets out the international framework that Irish Aid follows on aid effectiveness.
These documents frame Ireland’s approach to tackling hunger within the context of large increases in IA’s budget in recent years and subsequent significant downward pressure on IA’s resources since the onset of the current economic downturn currently facing Ireland. It should be noted however that Ireland’s commitments and disbursements of ODA have increased dramatically over recent years, see Figure 6 at the end of the document. Although a significant reduction in development assistance has occurred in the last two national budgets, it is hoped that Ireland will remain on track to achieve an ODA level of 0.7% of GNI in line with the repeated commitments by the Irish government.

Within IA, the HTF’s recommendations have been widely accepted, with hunger now the cornerstone government policy for overseas development. This has seen the establishment of an interdepartmental team hosted by IA and incorporating the Department of Finance; Department of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries and the Department of Foreign Affairs.

As mentioned previously a ‘Special Envoy for Hunger’ has also been appointed and is due to report to the interdepartmental team later this year. Similarly, there has been a commitment to target fully 20% of all Irish ODA to hunger related activities by 2012. In order to coordinate the implementation of this spending target as well as the wider recommendations of the HTF a ‘hunger unit’ has been established within IA, which is currently engaged in establishing detailed criteria and indicators regarding Ireland’s development assistance related directly to hunger.

The exact nature of how Irish Aid intends to amend its programming (and seek to address the programming of its development partners), and to organise the particular funding of its food- and hunger-related programmes (as well as those of its development partners) is of great interest to the Irish NGO community. Indeed, the decisions and funding levels around policy and programming will also help clarify to what extent each HTF recommendation is prioritised.

Figure 4 (in annex) illustrates the recent increase in Ireland’s development assistance to agricultural and food security related projects. The OECD’s development assistance committee (DAC), representing developed country donors, has a comprehensive reporting system which allows ODA comparisons across countries and over time. However, in part due to the multi-faceted nature of FNS support within overall development assistance, it is difficult to trace all FNS targeted projects through the current reporting mechanisms.

At an international level, Irish Aid is committed to engaging in active and high-level advocacy and leadership relating to hunger alleviation. This is focused specifically at several UN bodies, the African Union, CAADP and the EU, as well as encompassing high-level discussions at global summits and between the Irish government and its counterparts in developing countries.

Partnerships with the UK, US and Spain have been particularly salient with regard to international advocacy, for example in advance of the L’Aquila Statement on Food Security. These were aimed at progressing support for a comprehensive approach to global food insecurity as well as highlighting the importance of nutrition mainstreaming.

Irish development NGOs are keen to gain a deeper understanding, through closer constructive dialogue, of how Irish Aid expects to contribute towards monitoring of international pledges and obligations, as well as which funding mechanisms and programmes it intends to prioritise in its own financing commitments.

6. Irish NGO efforts to tackle global hunger

Irish civil society organisations, from missionary groups through to development NGOs, have historically engaged strongly in relation to food and agriculture.

Within this context of long-term and ongoing NGO engagement with hunger related policies and programmes, both within developing countries and at national and international level (particularly

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related to advocacy and leadership), Irish NGOs broadly support the recommendations of the Hunger Task Force.

However, the extent of Irish NGOs institutional knowledge of effective policies and programmes to address FNS issues is not always well captured and evident from within organisational position papers or policy documents. For this reason, it is challenging to synthesise the overall position of Irish NGOs in relation to the HTF recommendations directly.

Irish NGOs are numerous and diverse, and they often have different understanding of issues and priorities in relation to sustainable development, including the ways and means to best tackle global hunger. Yet there is valuable knowledge, experience and know-how to share (from within NGOs, as well as from partner organisations and communities with which they work) to feed into policy and programming debate.

Several NGOs are currently engaged in formulating discussion or position papers that address the issues faced in seeking to tackle global hunger, which include the challenge posed by the HTF report, in order to stimulate wider discussion. This is especially the case for areas where there may be a lack of consensus or where NGO thinking may be at odds with Government thinking or the HTF’s recommendations.

For example, some of Trocaire’s and Oxfam’s policies highlight areas of divergence from the HTF’s recommendations, for example on large agri-businesses. It would be useful to have a more complete understanding of how NGOs in Ireland are working to advance their understanding of hunger, often born out of many years of invaluable programming work, sometimes within a rights based approach; and their priorities in relation to tackling it, and it is hoped there will be more policy development and advocacy among NGOs working in this area in the years ahead.

7. Alignment of Global Responses and Ireland’s Response to Hunger

7.1 Alignment

There is significant alignment between the priorities of Irish Aid, Irish NGOs and many (though not all) of the other actors within the wider global hunger architecture. However, there are also several areas of divergence, some of which are outlined below (with particular reference to the 3 key pillars of the Hunger Task Force report).

It is important to note whether these diverging views are of strategic importance to Ireland’s advocacy and programme work in relation to the wider community of engaged stakeholders.

As seen in the draft UCFA, discussed in Dublin in May 2010, the HTF’s key priority areas reflect an ongoing evolution of the issues facing food and nutrition insecure communities and an increased understanding as to how these issues can be resolved in a coherent and sustainable manner. This is expected to be achieved through ongoing partnerships between donors and CSOs, whether working internationally or within countries facing severe food and nutrition insecurity.

The first and second of the HLT’s key priority areas resonate with the widespread recognition within Irish Aid and Irish NGOs of the importance of livelihood programming to long-term positive and sustainable food and nutrition security outcomes. Livelihood programming is often an entry point into local communities by NGOs (see this example from the Irish Red Cross).

The third priority area reflects a consensus within Ireland that there needs to be comprehensive and collective effort towards FNS progress and underscores that political will internationally and within countries is crucial.

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Dóchas also considers that the possibilities and limits of the role for both civil society and the private sector needs to be better defined, in relation to the three pillars of the HTF, through ongoing dialogue.

6.2 Divergence

One important difference between the Irish and international hunger architecture lies in the approach to moving from recommendations and implementation. Dóchas members believe there is a gap around the HTF, especially in the absence in the HTF report concerning processes to translate the report’s sound recommendations into a concrete action plan with clear roles for relevant stakeholders.

The Irish Red Cross has identified some important blockages to effective advocacy work, including lack of access to those ‘best positioned to effect change’, as well as a lack of political will more generally. This is perhaps best illustrated through the unprecedented 2009 cuts in Ireland’s ODA, far beyond the level commensurate with the economic slowdown.

The HTF report itself recognises that the main challenge for the Irish government and therefore IA is related to developing effective and coherent actions which donors, national governments and civil society will buy into - and with considerably increased resources (Hunger Task Force 2008, p.24). Consensus is difficult to create, all the more so when addition resources are required.

Some of the gaps between recommendations and implementation of the HTF report, as they appear to NGOs, include:

- Lack of an implementation plan (beyond an Irish Aid one) for the HTF recommendations;
- Shortage of real achievements in achieving greater Irish policy coherence for development in the area of agriculture and food. Timely information sharing on the work of the inter-departmental hunger task team, its inputs to the IDCD and the work of the IDCD would be valuable in advancing the discourse on policy coherence by a wider range of stakeholders.
- Transparency, predictability and accountability regarding ODA levels overall (including a year by year plan towards achieving 0.7% by 2015) and, specifically, the 20% portion of Irish development assistance funding to be targeted at hunger;
- Strategic engagement in specific partner countries of FNS-related programmes in order to establish best practice as well as signalling alignment of IA programming and the HTF’s recommendations;
- A formal Irish Aid for Trade strategy that specifically complements hunger task force objectives;
- Standardised monitoring and information gathering regarding FNS progress, outcomes and impact. (The success of the Global Hunger Index and similar documents will assist in mitigating this issue);
- Tangible advancements in research in order to analyse those issues around FNS that are not yet well understood. These include, in particular:
  - The importance of wider agricultural investments;
  - The movement away from investing predominantly in agricultural inputs and towards investment in infrastructure, market mechanisms, food processing and storage capacity;
  - Rural-urban dynamics relating to food and nutrition insecurity; and
  - The effects of local and regional governance quality on food and nutrition insecure populations.

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27 Trocaire 2010: Trocaire Submission to Hunger Envoy: Update on HTF related initiatives over the past 18 months, technical report.
8. Moving Forward

NGOs welcome the progress that IA has made in tackling the global hunger agenda post-HTF at national and international levels, and through its programmes. This paper illustrates the potential for further dialogue and engagement between IA and Irish development NGOs, and both stakeholders appear to be engaged and willing to take actions that enhance Ireland's response to the global food and hunger crises.

Irish NGOs have significant and varied expertise related to the three pillars of the HTF. However there is a huge diversity of issues and approaches, resulting in the need to determine a number of particular areas within the overarching architecture on which to engage with IA.

Thus, Irish NGOs are challenged to prioritise a limited number of policy and programming issues related to the HTF which they want to advance with Irish Aid. With that in mind, the absence of a consolidated action plan (or perhaps lack of a shared plan) regarding how the HTF is to be carried forward has meant opportunities to further leverage existing work have not be fully captured.

There are a number of examples where this work could be leveraged:

- The field presence experience of Irish NGOs offers potential for rolling out, testing and shaping the nature of pro-poor research being supported through CGIAR;
- Many Irish NGOs have food security programmes in the partner countries where Irish Aid is addressing small scale production: collaboration on research and pilot approaches may improve agricultural programmes there;
- Irish NGOs' linkages with Southern NGOs could be leveraged through IA support for Civil Society Networking with UN and Government on Hunger in order to escalate Ireland's high level advocacy work in this area.
- Advancement with regard to the interdepartmental team on hunger for promoting Ireland’s Policy Coherence for Development
- Alignment of Irish Aid country strategy papers with the recommendations of the HTF – although it is noted, and welcomed that the most recent update of the Strategy paper for Malawi reflects important movement on this;
- Continued focus on HTF-related programmes in funding decisions. (Some NGO funding processes seem to increasingly reflecting this emphasis, which is noted.)

Irish Aid is currently engaged, along with the Special Envoy on Hunger in reviewing the progress made on the Hunger Task Force recommendations. For their part, Dóchas members hope that the following issues can be specifically addressed:

- Details and priorities for IA’s involvement with the reform processes currently unfolding within the wide global hunger framework especially as related to multilateral donors and partnerships between donors and developing country policy makers (for example, the CFS reform);
- The focus of IA’s research targeting the needs of smallholder agriculture (for example, how is it gender mainstreamed?);
- A description of the resources designated to building the capacity of agricultural specialists.
- The current implementation difficulties faced by IA both nationally and internationally. For example, interdepartmental coherence in terms of national agriculture strategies/EU trade positions etc. and development objectives regarding wider development aims.
- The importance of addressing FNS through a rights-based approach, in line with the current global architecture;
- Formalising Irish Aid’s view and approach regarding the links between relief and recovery & development, along with related discussion regarding food aid and food assistance as well as rural development;
- The role of climate change adaptation within IA’s approach to FNS, as well as towards overall policy coherence for development

Irish NGOs have a long tradition of food security and nutrition related programming, related to the three pillars of the HTF Report, and many have been – and still are - financed by Irish Aid for some of
that work. Different NGOs have different areas of expertise that can contribute to advancing the three pillars of the HTF Report. The institutional knowledge inherent in these on-going programmes and the expertise they represent needs to be translated into effective policy and research outcomes so that they can be communicated to a wider audience and contribute to an ongoing implementation of the HTF's recommendations.

Having a consolidated implementable plan would facilitate bringing this experience together to advance the hunger agenda. To achieve this, Irish NGOs themselves need to identify a few key points on policy and programming they would like to advance with IA. This is due to the diversity of Irish NGOs and their work on hunger making it difficult for IA to engage with a varied and broad range of issues simultaneously. This will require frank dialogue, possibly facilitated by Dóchas, between IA and Irish NGOs, regarding their broad alignments, as well as those areas representing policy and practice divergence.

For example, best practice may be achieved through focusing on research, especially into the effectiveness of existing programming, initially in one or two target countries. It should be noted that scaling up and the wider applicability of these research findings will have to be carefully considered, with recourse to existing research-based evidence relating to other scaled-up development programming etc (for example, PROGRESSA a conditional cash transfer programme in Mexico [http://www.ifpri.org/dataset/mexico-evaluation-progresa](http://www.ifpri.org/dataset/mexico-evaluation-progresa) or BOLSA, a conditional cash transfer programme in Brazil [http://www.mfdr.org/sourcebook/6-1Brazil-BolsaFamilia.pdf](http://www.mfdr.org/sourcebook/6-1Brazil-BolsaFamilia.pdf)).

It is clear that there are rich pockets of institutional policy and programme knowledge that have yet to be fully employed in tackling these FNS issues within both Irish Aid and Irish NGOs. Deeper engagement between the two would strengthen Ireland's position as a global hunger leader in order to further motivate progress towards MDG 1.

**Conclusions**

Amid increased global hunger, arising from the global economic, financial and food price crises of recent years, coupled with the effects of climate change and local factors in given areas, the 10-year UN review to accelerate achievement of the MDGs assumes great importance.

Ireland is making significant efforts, and progress, in raising awareness of the importance of MDG1 – and reflecting on ways to move forward, globally and within developing countries, on tackling extreme poverty and hunger.

The aim of this document, conceived by the Food Security & Livelihoods Working Group of Dóchas, is to stimulate dialogue within the NGO sector, and between Irish Aid and Irish NGOs, as to how best to maintain, and advance, the momentum that has been established on tackling issues of food and nutrition insecurity.

To that end, the global hunger architecture is outlined as well as the Irish response to the recent increase in the numbers of those facing severe food and nutrition insecurity in vulnerable countries. Finally, areas of policy and practice alignment and divergence are highlighted in an effort to propose key areas for immediate and medium-term dialogue and engagement.

**Towards Irish NGOs, Dóchas urges:**

- Identify a few key points on policy and programming in the area of hunger, food and nutrition that they would like to advance with IA;
- Finalise (or develop) internal policy documents regarding FNS and make these available widely to best enhance engagement with other NGOs as well as with IA.

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29 Trocaire 2010: Trocaire Submission to Hunger Envoy: Update on HTF related initiatives over the past 18 months, technical report.
● Identify programmes in strategic partner countries that may be suitable for collaborative research with IA in order to establish best practice surrounding practices to address FNS issues in developing countries.

● Use the Dóchas network to share experiences, and ensure those experiences are captured, validated and communicated.

Towards Irish Aid, Dóchas urges:

1. Agreement with Irish NGOs on the basis of a more structured and constructive dialogue on Hunger.
2. Development, with NGO input, of a clear action plan for implementation of the HTF report.
3. Identification with NGOs of a (limited) number of policy and/or programming priorities around which a common agenda can be built.
4. Consideration of the proposal that an Irish Aid priority country be chosen where Irish Aid and Irish NGOs might take forward some specific search/programming that will lead to best practice in an area of work that would complement the HTF recommendations.
5. Enhancing transparency, to the extent possible within the bounds of Government decision-making and diplomacy, regarding Irish Aid and wider Irish government positions in relation to:
   a. Reform of the global hunger architecture;
   b. Increased investment for agriculture and food & nutrition security (FNS);
   c. Best practice research;
   d. The Irish and EU trade agendas; and,
   e. Accounting for the 20% spending towards FNS goals, as recommended in the HTF report and accepted by Government.

This agenda could potentially be addressed through:

● Regular teleconferences between the Hunger Unit in Irish Aid and key members of NGO the sector.
● Collaborative and shared research both in Ireland and partner countries in the areas of food and agriculture (For example, large-scale land investments in developing countries).
● Effective scaling up of nutrition interventions, such as promoting optimal breastfeeding and complementary feeding practices, food fortification and supplementation initiatives.
● Systematic and specific attention to particular vulnerability (such as persons with disability, people living with HIV or AIDS, widows, etc) in all FNS programmes. This could include support for projects to improve knowledge on chronic diseases associated with food and nutrition insecurity.
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Trocaire (2010b), Trocaire Submission to Hunger Envoy: Update on HTF re-lated Initiatives over the past 18 months, Technical report, Trocaire.

Welthungerhilfe, IFPRI and Concern Worldwide (2009), 'Global Hunger Index: The Challenge of Hunger, Focus on Financial Crisis and Gender Inequality', Annual Published Index.


Acronyms

- CSO: Civil Society Organisation
- FNS: Food and Nutrition Security
- HTF: Hunger Task Force Report to the Government of Ireland
- IA: Irish Aid
- MDG: Millennium Development Goals
- ODA: Overseas Development Assistance
- SA: South Asia
- SSA: Sub-Saharan Africa
Annex 1: Figures and tables

Figure 1: Fuel Prices, 2000-2011


Figure 2: Import Prices, 2000-2011

Figure 3: Export Prices, 2000-2011


Figure 4: Ireland’s Development Assistance, Food and Nutrition Security (2002-2008)

Table 1: Least Developed Country Growth Rates, Africa 1990-2007

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Figure 5: Developing Country Growth Rates, 1979-2008

Source: World Development Indicators, World Bank.

Figure 6: Ireland's Development Assistance, Commitments and Disbursements (2002-2008)
