

Development Cooperation Division and the Irish Aid Programme

Overview

1. Development Cooperation Division manages the Irish Aid programme and is responsible for all aspects of Ireland's relations with Africa under the 2011 Africa Strategy of the Department. Ireland's Official Development Assistance (ODA) programme is focused on the reduction of poverty and hunger in the developing world, with a geographic focus on some of the poorest countries in sub-Saharan Africa.
2. The ODA allocation for 2014 is €599.16 million. Of this, €479 million is managed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Irish Aid) under Vote 27 – International Cooperation. The remaining estimated €120 million is accounted for by the contributions of other Government Departments to development cooperation (for example the Department of Agriculture's contributions to the World Food Programme, the Department of Finance contribution to the World Bank's International Development Association) and Ireland's share of the EU Development Cooperation Budget. At this level of allocation, on current GNP estimates, Ireland will provide some 0.43% of GNP in ODA, slightly lower than the 0.46% achieved in 2013. The Government is committed to making further progress towards the UN target of 0.7% of GNP as soon as economic circumstances permit. While the volume of spending has been broadly stabilised in the past three years, it is clear that Ireland's percentage is falling slightly, although for last year we remained, just, in the top ten of international donors in percentage terms. It is acknowledged that the 0.7% target will not be reached by the international target date of 2015.
3. The funding administered by Irish Aid is delivered through a range of partners including non-governmental organisations, missionaries, UN agencies, international organisations and humanitarian agencies. Funding is also channelled through local, regional and national government systems in partner countries, with a view to developing their health, education and local government systems.
4. Programme administration costs are just under 6% of the overall programme, a low figure by international standards. The programme is consistently rated highly internationally and has been positively peer-reviewed by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD. The last review, in 2009, found that Ireland had become a significant global player in development cooperation, with a sharp focus on poverty reduction and on developing countries in Africa. It reiterated previous positive findings around Ireland's flexibility, commitment to multilateralism and to reaching the poorest of the poor. Overall it described the programme as cutting edge and Ireland as a champion in making aid more effective. The 2014 OECD peer review is currently being finalised, following a series of discussions and visits this year and will be published following a day of meetings with officials, with an opening session with the Minister of State, in early October. The indications at this stage are that it will rate the aid programme highly by international standards, and will recognise the achievement of stabilising aid funding levels since 2011 while prioritising a focus on the achievement of results.

One World One Future

5. The Government's new policy on International Development – One World One Future – was launched in May 2013, following approval by Government. It sets out the goals and priority areas of action for Ireland's aid programme for the next four years. Building on the 2006 White Paper on Irish Aid, the new policy, while continuing to prioritise poverty reduction and hunger eradication, reflects the changing public sector context in Ireland, and emphasises the importance of a whole of Government approach to international development.
6. It clearly sets out the Government's intention to situate aid within the evolving international development context and build more rounded and mature partnerships with developing countries, while maintaining the focus on the poorest, the hungry and malnourished as well as those affected by conflict, insecurity and humanitarian emergencies.
7. One World One Future has a clear focus on three goals: Reducing Hunger, Sustainable Growth, and Good Governance. It identifies six priority areas for action: global hunger, fragile states, climate change, economic growth, essential services, human rights and accountability. The new policy provides a clear framework for the prioritisation of activities and the allocation of resources in order to maximise impact, strengthen accountability and demonstrate value for money over the period 2013-2017

Where Irish Aid works

8. Ireland has nine Key Partner Countries, with a commitment to long term strategic assistance. These remain at the heart of the aid programme. Eight of the countries are in sub-Saharan Africa: Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Lesotho (where the Embassy will close this summer, the programme to be administered from Pretoria), Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Sierra Leone (the newest Key Partner Country, from this year). One is in Asia: Vietnam. Some €162 million has been allocated to the programme budgets for these countries in 2014, and additional funding is provided through support for programmes operated by NGOs and multilateral agencies. Smaller amounts are also provided for bilateral development programmes in other partner countries: South Africa, Zimbabwe, Liberia, and Palestine. The Government has decided to re-open the Embassy in Nairobi this year; it will focus on economic, political and regional work, with a development component, still to be programmed.
9. Irish Aid also works closely with NGOs in terms of policy development and the funding of NGO programmes and projects. Ireland channels a higher proportion of its aid through NGOs than virtually any other major donor. Grants are provided under various schemes in support of the long term development assistance, emergency assistance, development education and human rights activities. Overall, some 25% of Ireland's total ODA, and about a third of Vote 27, is allocated through civil society organisations, including €16 million in for the development work of missionaries.

Emergency and Recovery

10. Funding of €57.5 million has been budgeted in 2014 for emergency humanitarian assistance which is provided to alleviate the immediate effects of natural disasters such as floods, famine or drought; as well as for manmade disasters such as conflict related emergencies. The funding is channelled through partnerships with UN

Agencies and international organisations such as the Red Cross family and through NGOs. Further support is provided for post-disaster relief and recovery in such places the Philippines and Haiti.

Multilateral Assistance

11. Ireland's membership of the European Union, the United Nations and a range of international multilateral organisations allows it participate in their development cooperation programmes at a global level and enables Ireland to provide assistance to areas outside of our priority countries. The total planned expenditure for 2014 under this heading is €67.5 million, in addition to our share of the overall EU development cooperation budget. The contribution to the European Development Fund (for the EU's development programme with the African Caribbean and Pacific States) is a mandatory one. Contributions are also made on a voluntary basis to a range of multilateral development agencies including UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

International Development Policy: Ireland's role

12. Since the Report of the Government's Hunger Task Force in 2008, Ireland has established a leading international role in the fight to end global hunger and undernutrition, taking a lead within the EU, at the UN and with partners including the United States, and in the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement. Building on the EU Presidency role and the Hunger Nutrition Climate Justice Conference in Dublin Castle in April 2013, Ireland co-facilitated the UN Special Event on the Millennium Development Goals in New York in September last and is currently a member of the Open Working Group meeting in New York to agree recommendations to the UN Secretary General on the framework for global development to replace the MDGs after 2015. This will lead to intensive intergovernmental negotiations in the first half of 2015, leading up to a major UN Summit on international development in September 2015. The post-2015 framework will be a major theme of the UN General Assembly in September 2014.

The Africa Strategy

13. The Africa Strategy of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade was launched by the Tánaiste in 2011, bringing together all aspects of Ireland's relations with Africa: economic and trade; political; and development. The Division manages the implementation of the Strategy, which has included a broadening of work across the mission network in Africa, and with Enterprise Ireland, on the development of bilateral economic links, including trade opportunities. The most notable public element of the strategy, apart from increased numbers of trade missions to Africa, has been the annual Africa Ireland Economic Forum, which has brought together Irish business representatives and African representatives of government and business in Dublin in the autumn. The level of interest among Irish business has been very high, and the fourth Forum is scheduled for 30 October 2014, the central element of which has always been an address by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade.

*Development Cooperation Division,
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