Submission to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in respect of
Irish Aid White Paper Consultation

- Nature of views: Organisational
- Organisation (if applicable): Dóchas - Disability in International Development Working Group (DDIDWG)

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Introduction

The Dóchas Disability and International Development Working Group (DDIDWG) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade as part of its consultation on a new White Paper for International Development. The DDIDWG was established in 2006 and is convened by Dóchas members working in the area of disability and international development. It promotes the rights and inclusion of P in middle and low income countries and fragile states/humanitarian settings by raising awareness, sharing expertise and promoting action on Disability Inclusive Development (DID) and Disaster Risk Reduction (DIDRR), including lobbying for change. Membership includes the Centre for Global Development - Trinity College Dublin (observer), CBM Ireland, Disability Federation of Ireland, Misean Cara, Oxfam Ireland, Plan Ireland, Sightsavers Ireland, Trócaire and UNESCO IT Tralee (observer).

This submission specifically focuses on Ireland meeting its commitment to people with disabilities in its new policy for international development.

One billion people, or 15% of the world’s population, experience some form of disability, and disability prevalence is higher for middle and low-income countries, fragile states and humanitarian settings. One-fifth of the estimated global total, or between 110 million and 190 million people, experience significant disabilities. Persons with disabilities, on average, are more likely to experience adverse socioeconomic outcomes than persons without disabilities, such as less education, poorer health outcomes, lower levels of employment, and higher poverty rates.

As a sectoral body which consists of agencies working on disability issues in both development and humanitarian contexts, the DDIDWG welcomed Minister Cannon’s statement in September 2017 that Ireland is committed to addressing the needs of children and other persons with disabilities (PwD) by increasing support to specific initiatives and ensuring a focus on disability is mainstreamed in relevant programming work. It is in this spirit of highlighting the important role for Irish Aid in promoting the rights of PwD and supporting its ambition to mainstream disability in programming which underpins this submission. Whilst this paper does incorporate key messages from other submissions, it does not seek to reemphasise content unrelated to a disability inclusive agenda contained within the broader Dóchas network submission or those of its constituent members.

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

Ireland’s overseas development aid programme has been internationally recognised for its quality and efforts to target the poorest and most marginalised through a rights-based approach. The Government’s 2013 Policy for International Development (*One World, One Future*), and 2015 Foreign Policy paper, *The Global Island*, both affirm Ireland’s commitment to addressing the rights and needs of vulnerable people, including those with disabilities, which should be maintained in the new policy.

Over the course of 2017, Irish Aid drafted a Disability Guidance Note, which is a welcome step towards strengthening internal capacities and greater mainstreaming of PwD in Irish Aid’s policy framework. The development of the Guidance Note, alongside Ireland’s recent ratification of the United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the strong capacity and promising practices of multilateral and civil society programme partners in this field, provides an important opportunity for Irish Aid to actualise their commitment to disability inclusive development mainstreaming in all aspects of development and humanitarian assistance.

In this context and complemented by Agenda 2030 (discussed below), it is imperative that Ireland and its partners strengthen their work with partner countries to design and implement social protection systems which will meet the needs of those left the furthest behind immediately and to ensure they remain sustainable in the long-term. It is encouraging to see a continued focus on gender equality in the Consultation Paper, as there are opportunities to deepen the policy commitments with respect to the intersectionality of disability and gender.

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

In recent years, major donors and bilateral agencies have come to recognise the importance of including PwD in all aspects of development cooperation, which represents an important step in ensuring that no one is left behind and excluded from economic and social progress. This recognition has been influenced by the persistent discrimination of PwD and exclusion from development cooperation. Children with disabilities are, for example, ten times less likely to go to school than children without disabilities, and PwD are particularly vulnerable in times of emergency and conflict and fail to receive the care and protection that they need. In some countries, national census figures indicate that PwD comprise just 2 per cent of the population, while other
estimates for the same countries show numbers 8-10 times higher. Failure to collect data about girls and young women with disabilities renders them invisible to governments and policy makers.

The recognition of the importance of including PwD in all aspects of development cooperation has also been driven by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the obligations it places on states to ensure that PwD can fully exercise their rights and are given a fair chance to live a dignified and full life.

The CRPD is the main legal instrument guiding global disability inclusion in the 21st century. Governments that have ratified the CRPD commit to promoting and protecting the rights and dignity of PwD in every sphere of life, including in the field of international development. The CRPD pays particular attention to the link between poverty and disability; it is the first international human rights treaty to have a stand-alone article (Article 32) which addresses International Cooperation. Article 32 of the CRPD provides a comprehensive normative framework for mainstreaming disability in the development agenda, whilst Article 11 relates to the safety and protection of PwD in humanitarian and emergency contexts. In light of Ireland’s ratification of the CRPD in March 2017, the State is required to place a greater emphasis on ensuring that the rights of PwD are promoted through its development cooperation and humanitarian assistance policies and programmes. Given that all nine of Irish Aid’s existing key partner countries have ratified the CRPD3, it seems evident that this shared obligation would be a natural priority.

Therefore, at this critical juncture of establishing a new Policy for International Development, it is crucial that Irish Aid strengthen its commitment to disability inclusive development and humanitarian action, and reflect on the key role it must play to ensure that the State meets its recently acquired international obligations as they arise under Article 32 and Article 11 of CRPD.

**Articles 11 and 32 of CRPD & Ireland’s Policy for International Development**

Practically speaking, Articles 11 and 32 require that disability issues be integrated into all development interventions and humanitarian action associated with Ireland’s development cooperation programme. With respect to the new policy, it is important that Irish Aid give due consideration to the four areas of focus contained in Article 32 (outlined below) in framing the development priorities and areas of intervention identified in the Consultation Paper. The four measures detailed in Article 32 are:

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1. **Inclusivity and accessibility**: Obligates donor governments to ensure that their international development and humanitarian relief work are inclusive of and accessible to PwD;

2. **Capacity building**: A two-way exchange and sharing of information, experience, training and best practice between donor governments, partners and collaborators, including disabled people and their organisations;

3. **Research and knowledge**: Cooperation in research and access to technical knowledge; and

4. **Accessible and assistive technologies**: Donor governments technical and economic assistance must, where appropriate, include access to and sharing of accessible and assistive technologies.

Indeed, a deeper consideration of the four measures outlined in Article 32 in relation to the priority areas identified in the consultation paper would help ensure that interventions specifically targeting PwD are balanced by mainstreaming disability issues in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all development programmes and projects, as well as humanitarian interventions as per Article 11.

Beyond the CRPD, it is abundantly clear that the broader international policy framework has changed significantly with respect to the inclusion and protection of PwD in recent years. Commitment to disability inclusive development is now clearly reflected in the international policy framework outlined in the Consultation Paper which informs Irish Aid’s work, with PwD or disability referenced:

- as key stakeholders in the preamble of the **Paris Climate Accord**;
- either directly or indirectly as part of the preamble, guiding principles, priorities for action, and stakeholders in the **Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030**. In addition to being infused with disability inclusive development terminology such as accessibility, inclusion and universal design throughout the document, the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 in Sendai, Japan also incorporated explicit recommendations toward a disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction framework and its implementation;
- eleven times within the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** (SDGs);
- with respect to social protection (para 12), employment and decent work (para 16), education (para 78), accessible technologies (para 114), and high-quality
disaggregated data (para 126) in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development;

- in the Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action launched at the World Humanitarian Summit which has been endorsed by the European Union (EU);

- in paragraph 11 of the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation

- as part of the EUs commitment to address multiple discriminations faced by vulnerable people and marginalised groups through a rights-based approach to development (paras 16 and 32) in the European Consensus on Development;

In addition to core international agreements which entail obligations for Ireland, disability inclusive development has also gained significant traction from within civil society and has become a hallmark of quality development and humanitarian programming, such that is embedded in quality assurance markers, such as the Global Standard for CSO Accountability, the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) on Quality and Accountability and Humanitarian Inclusion Standards.

Whilst this submission focuses primarily on the changing policy context, other sectoral and organisational submissions have clearly articulated the changing global context in which Irish Aid will implement its new strategy. However, it is disheartening to note that PwD have not been specifically mentioned in the Consultation Paper’s review of Development Challenges, specifically as a population which is consistently poorer than the average in income, health, education, employment and social inclusion and in need of specific consideration if we are “to extend the benefits to all” (para 2.5). Despite decades of mainstream policies that promote growth and development, policies have often failed to incorporate equal access, and PwD continue to have inequitable access to education, employment, health care, social protection and legal systems, and therefore find themselves more vulnerable to shock and stresses which arise from a range of events. Indeed, there is ample evidence to suggest that PwD get left even further behind as developing countries become wealthier, and as noted recently at a Bridging the Gap conference, “the development process is not inclusive by default.” This inter-relationship between poverty and disability, and in particular the susceptibility of PwD to poverty, is well-established. People living in poverty are more at risk of becoming disabled through the consequences of poverty, such as unsafe living environments, under-nutrition, lack of access to immunisation, exposure to landmines, poor road safety, the contraction of communicable diseases with

4 https://bridgingthegap-project.eu/about-the-project/
inadequate treatment when infected, and through birthing services which are unsafe for both mothers and new-borns.

Finally, it is worth underscoring the particular impact which contracting space for civil society\(^5\) has on disability inclusive development, and Disabled People’s Organisations (DPOs) in particular. The voices of PwD are already marginalised, and it is important that any effort to defend the values of civil society space specifically seeks to amplify the voices of those most marginalised. In addition to mainstreaming disability inclusive development, funding, dialogue and support to DPOs in partner countries is needed to build support, develop respect and solidarity, broaden engagement and mobilise commitment to ensuring that those left furthest behind are included in development gains.

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

As articulated in the Dóchas network submission, the most transformational aspect of the 2030 Agenda is arguably the cross-cutting pledge to ‘Leave No One Behind’ (LNOB); the commitment that all goals and targets will be met for all nations, peoples and segments of society, and that the furthest behind will be reached first.

To deliver on this transformational pledge, Ireland and Irish Aid will need to reframe its policies, investments and practices in order to demonstrate tangible results that tackle structural inequalities, barriers and power relationships. Globally, at least 1.4 billion people – the men, women and children who make up the poorest 20% of the population\(^6\) - are being left behind. Urgent, specific targeting and innovative approaches are required to reach those being left the furthest behind first, including women, girls and PwD. Whilst it is encouraging to see LNOB referenced as the framework through which Ireland views its priorities for transformation, if Ireland is serious that no one should be left behind, a clear and strong commitment to disability inclusive programming is essential from Irish Aid and its implementing partners. This should form part of a deeper commitment to inclusion in the context of LNOB which extends beyond the overlapping challenges of conflict, climate change and inequality to a more robust articulation of how vulnerabilities intersect, compounding inequalities and presenting often significant challenges for identification, access, empowerment and participation. A continued focus on gender equality is welcomed.

\(^5\) See Dóchas Submission on the Importance of Civil Society Space and Protection of Human Rights Defenders.

\(^6\) The poorest 20% of the world’s population consists of those currently living below the international poverty line of $1.90 a day, plus the people who are most vulnerable to falling back into extreme poverty. It is a figure named the P20. Development Initiatives (2017) [http://devinit.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/P20-Initiative-baseline-report.pdf](http://devinit.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/P20-Initiative-baseline-report.pdf), accessed 8 August 2018.
given that women and girls with disabilities typically face considerably different issues and greater challenges than men and boys.

In addition to the centrality of disability inclusive practice and programming to the LNOB agenda, **disability inclusive practice is a constitutive element of a comprehensive rights-based approach to development**, which Irish Aid is to be commended for remaining committed to. The codification of disability inclusive development which has taken place in international human rights law has reframed disability from a medical issue to one of basic human rights, and created an obligation on governments as duty bearers to ensure that PwD as rights holders are able to exercise their rights and actively contribute to their communities.

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

1. The changes in context outlined above accumulate to provide an imperative to mainstream disability issues into Ireland’s development assistance programme, alongside the continuing need to support specific action to enable PwD to overcome the multiple barriers they face in Ireland’s Programme Countries and elsewhere. This combination, known as the **“twin-track approach”**, provides a practical framework for advancing the named inclusion of PwD in development activity and humanitarian assistance. Both mainstreaming and disability-specific work are necessary and complementary, but on their own, neither will lead to best-quality results. In this respect, the lessons gained through many years of work on gender equality and the empowerment of women are highly instructive to the disability and development agenda, as genuine inclusion and empowerment can only occur when both tracks are employed together and lessons from each are consistently shared.

2. **Irish Aid should specifically mention PwD in the Consultation Paper’s review of Development Challenges**, specifically as a population which is consistently poorer than the average in income, health, education, employment and social inclusion and in need of specific consideration if we are “to extend the benefits to all” (para 2.5).
3. **Both governmental (through bilateral and multilateral arrangements\(^7\)) and non-governmental organisations funded by Irish Aid, whether based in Ireland or abroad, should be required to demonstrate a practical commitment to accessibility (of information, infrastructure, systems, participation) and the inclusion of PwD in policies, campaigns, projects and/or programmes.** At the very least, it is essential that Irish Aid ensures that programmes and projects which have no apparent strategy for the inclusion of PwD do no harm, i.e. do not wittingly or unwittingly make matters worse for PwD by intensifying existing barriers or creating new ones. This will involve ensuring that all funded organisations at least consider the likely impact of their actions on PwD in developing countries.

4. **As part of the LNOB agenda, Ireland should work closely with civil society organisations, other donor agencies, research bodies, community and indigenous groups, and particularly DPOs to **agree a common approach to identifying those who have been left behind**. Given the challenges of intersectionality, it is important to consider a combination of approaches to identification and dedicate more resources to strengthen data collection and analysis\(^8\).

5. **Irish Aid should establish an integrated approach to the collection of data on disability in both development and humanitarian assistance that commits to:**

   - the collection of disability disaggregated data, research and learning, and reports including the DAC disability marker\(^9\).

The 2030 Agenda references disability specifically in five goals and seven targets, and commits countries to disaggregating data by disability across a number of indicators. Better, more accurate data on PwD – and on other people who experience exclusion – is required if Agenda 2030 is to deliver lasting change. Greater collaboration between governments, multilateral and donor agencies, and civil society is required to promote, collect, analyse and report better data on disability. The Irish Aid Programme has a key role to play in ensuring data relating to PwD is collected, and utilized to inform mainstreaming of disability inclusion across programming and funding streams. Specifically, Irish Aid should give consideration to

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\(^7\) This includes organisations, agencies and Trust Funds already in receipt of support from Irish Aid who could do more with respect to PwD, including UNDP, UNICEF, the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women, the UN Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNPRPD), and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE).


utilising the Washington Group’s disability question set\(^\text{10}\). Six key partner countries (Malawi, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia) have committed to using the Washington Group questions on disability status in upcoming national censuses or surveys, of which two (Tanzania and Zambia) will include the questions in their national population census in the next five years.

The lack of comparable data on disability remains a critical development issue. Without better, more accurate and comparable data on disability it will not be possible to accurately measure development progress and truly ensure no one is left behind. This lack of data often means decisions are made that reinforce existing inequalities, as governments and decision-makers allocate resources in a way that excludes PwD. This is further compounded within international development programmes; as many organisations do not collect data on disability it is impossible to know how and if PwD are participating. Given the intersection of domestic and international compliance and reporting agendas under Agenda 2030 and CRPD, it is further recommended that Irish Aid liaise with the Central Statistics Office in Ireland to assess opportunities for alignment and complementarity of disaggregated disability data.

In addition to this, Irish Aid should leverage the commitment to research and learning outlined in the Consultation Paper to conduct data collection which supports the LNOB agenda and provide funding through existing modalities to pilot learnings which support disability inclusive programming. In this regard, Irish Aid’s continued partnership with Irish development NGOs in the field of disability inclusion is key to reaching PwD and providing research, data and learnings. Civil society must continue to bring evidence from the field to shape more effective and equitable policy-making, public engagement and development education inclusive of PwD.

Finally, once finalised, Ireland should require all partners to its development assistance programme to use the DAC disability marker when reporting on expenditure.

6. In addition to continuing to partner with Irish development NGOs, funding and technical/advisory support should be provided to representative organisations and DPOs in Ireland’s partner countries to build effective partnerships, to improve the quality of their own programmes, to broaden engagement and to mobilise commitment to ensuring that those left furthest behind are included in development gains.

7. **Irish Aid’s commitment to disability inclusion requires dedicated resourcing in terms of capacity and technical expertise.** Whilst Irish Aid’s internal Disability Guidance Note represents a welcome step towards greater mainstreaming of PwD in Irish Aid practice, deeper integration of the commitment is required within the new policy framework (as noted above), along with increased technical expertise, accompaniment to staff on the guidance note, access to continuous learning opportunities, and budget.