



An Roinn Gnóthaí  
Eachtracha agus Trádála  
Department of  
Foreign Affairs and Trade

# Minister of State for Overseas Development Aid and Diaspora

## Background Brief

26 June 2020

## **Briefing Note for Minister of State for Overseas Development Aid and Diaspora**

### **Business Support Unit BSU**

The DCAD Business Support Unit (BSU) has responsibility for a range of functions which have an overarching theme across the Division. These include: coordination of PQs, briefing materials, representations, FOI requests; reporting to the OECD on details of aid expenditure; compilation of the Annual Report on ODA; support to the Senior Management Group; compliance with corporate governance requirements; representing the Division at cross departmental working groups; facilities management.

The BSU also provides a range of supports to units and missions on the adoption and implementation of standardised approaches to Grant Management and Mission Strategy development. It works closely with other units in further development of grant management and results systems, and in developing tools to track progress with policy implementation for A Better World.

### **Africa Unit**

Africa Unit supports the work of eleven Embassies in sub-Saharan Africa and is responsible for all aspects of Ireland's relationship with the 49 countries of sub-Saharan Africa, guided by '*Global Ireland: Ireland's Strategy for Africa to 2025*'. It leads on EU-Africa relations, as well as Ireland's engagement with the African Union, UN Offices and regional economic communities in Africa.

With an anticipated peak of **COVID-19** in sub-Saharan Africa in September or thereafter, the pandemic poses particular strategic and operational challenges to Embassies in the region, particularly those managing international development programmes. Delivering on the ambitions set out in '*A Better World*' in the context of new constraints and new health, social, climate, economic and humanitarian challenges will be a central task of Africa Unit and our Missions in Africa over the coming months. At over €140 million in total, our Missions in Africa manage a substantial proportion of Ireland's ODA budget, and Africa Unit will seek to support them in managing this funding in a changed and more challenging environment.

African countries account for one-quarter of UN member states, while African issues account for around 60-70% of the agenda of the **UN Security Council**. Africa Unit is therefore preparing to play a critical role during Ireland's UN Security Council membership. Africa is

home to complex and protracted regional security and humanitarian challenges, from the Sahel to the Horn of Africa as well as the Great Lakes. Contributing informed and insightful analysis on these situations faces new challenges in the context of COVID-19.

The Africa Strategy places a particular emphasis on Ireland's EU membership in facilitating deeper relationships with Africa. In the coming months, there will be a strong focus on preparation for the 6<sup>th</sup> **EU-Africa Summit**, due to be held on 28-29 October in Brussels, including through a preparatory EU-Africa meeting at Ministerial level (dates and location TBC). The European Commission has prioritised the consolidation of a strong EU-Africa partnership and is working towards a new joint strategy with Africa to be endorsed at the EU-Africa Summit. Ireland is working in Brussels, with other Member States, and through our Embassies in Africa to contribute to and encourage an ambitious and effective EU-Africa partnership.

Africa Unit will continue to lead on the implementation of the strategic objectives set out in **Ireland's Africa Strategy** (encompassing political, economic, cultural and development relations), which are even more important now in contributing to Ireland's recovery from the COVID crisis. The Unit will support Irish trade and investment in the face of new challenges, including through leveraging Ireland's EU membership and recent membership of the African Development Bank, as well as other international financial institutions. It will support Embassies in the region to engage the Irish diaspora in recovery efforts, to protect our vulnerable communities in Africa, and to share Irish culture. The Unit will lead on the expansion of Ireland's footprint in West Africa and on Ireland's application for Associate Observer status of the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP), the first step of which has been successful.

### **Global Programmes' Unit**

Global Programmes' Unit (GPU) is responsible for Ireland's international development programmes outside of Africa – namely in Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar; and in the occupied Palestinian Territory. It is also responsible for our relationship with Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in Africa, the Caribbean and Pacific Regions, and the administration of Ireland's Fellowship Programme – which brings promising individuals from Developing Countries to Ireland to undertake Master's-level studies. The unit also administers the Stability Fund – which provides support for international conflict resolution

and peacebuilding activity – and the In-Country Micro Projects’ Scheme – which supports projects in countries where Ireland does not have a bilateral development programme.

The GPU budget in 2020 is €38.075 million

#### *Vietnam, and South East Asia international development programme*

Ireland’s international development programmes in the South East Asian countries of Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar are administered from our embassy in Hanoi, Vietnam. The core focus of the programme – which has a budget of €10m in 2020 - is to address vulnerability, reduce poverty and inequality and promote more inclusive economic growth in our four partner countries. Other areas of activity include gender equality and women’s empowerment, civil society development and humanitarian mine action to reduce loss of life and injury. In Vietnam there is a particular emphasis on supporting the development and empowerment of ethnic minority communities. These amount to 14% of Vietnam’s population and are seriously disadvantaged relative to the general population in areas such as education, nutrition, health and income. The programme also works to promote the building of stronger institutional linkages between Vietnamese and Irish state institutions on private sector development, food safety and agri-business and between Vietnamese and Irish higher education institutions on education, innovation and research sector.

When originally conceived more than 15-years-ago the Hanoi-based programme was chiefly focused on Vietnam, but over the years it has evolved a more regional aspect. This evolution will continue with the development of a revised strategy for Vietnam and the Mekong Delta region - due to get underway shortly, COVID-permitting.

#### *Support for the Palestinian People*

Against the backdrop of an unsettled political situation in the Middle East, Ireland’s support for a lasting and just political solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is reflected in a €16 million package of support for development and humanitarian activity.

This comprises €7 million for the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) which caters to the humanitarian and development needs of 5.6 million Palestine refugees and provides them with emergency assistance in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and a €9m (2020 revised budget) international development programme implemented by our Representative Office in Ramallah. The latter has a number of focuses, including improving access to and quality of education by strengthening the

capacity of the Palestinian Authority Ministry of Education and Higher Education, supporting civil society organisations to monitor human rights violations and promote greater accountability by both Israeli and Palestinian authorities and supporting UN-OCHA in managing humanitarian crises in the region.

In 2020-21 Ireland is working with the Agence Française de Développement (AFD) and the Palestinian Water Authority to develop solar power generation for the North Gaza Emergency Sewage Treatment Plant, providing energy for wastewater treatment and assisting in water table rehabilitation. Preventing the contamination of ground water (the only source of drinking water) by raw sewage is a critical health issue and humanitarian priority for Gaza.

### Small Island Developing States

The further deepening of Ireland's relationship with Small Island Developing States (SIDS) will be a policy priority for GPU during the coming period, building on the Government's strategy for partnership with SIDS, launched in June 2019. SIDS are an important – and sometimes neglected – international constituency who were key to Ireland's successful Security Council Campaign. Ireland is committed to amplifying their voice within multilateral bodies such as the EU and UN in a series of policy fronts – in particular Climate Change, which poses an existential threat to some SIDS.

31 of the 36 commitments in the SIDS' strategy have been delivered and GPU is developing a roadmap for the next stage of the relationship. This will include responding to requests from SIDS for assistance in policy areas such as tourism development, diaspora relations and on improving their understanding of EU processes.

One of the successes of Ireland-SIDS relationship in recent years has been the development of informal dialogues or listening spaces (labelled Ceili) between Irish and Pacific representatives – in particular at Ministerial level. An early visit to the region by the Minister for International Development would provide an opportunity to continue this dialogue and further deepen our relationship with our Pacific partners.

### Fellowships

Each year the Irish Aid Fellowship Programme brings promising mid-career individuals from ODA-eligible partner countries to Ireland to study for a Masters-level qualification at a University or Institute of Technology. The programme is intended to build capacity in these countries while simultaneously extending Ireland's network of influence and improving

familiarity with Ireland amongst a cohort with the potential to become influential in their home country. The award covers course fees, accommodation, living costs, and flights.

The programme has operated for 45 years, bringing students from African partner countries and, since 2009, Vietnam. Following a decision to expand the programme in 2019-20 it was enlarged to include 24 students from the occupied Palestinian Territories and in 2020-2021, for the first time, it includes Fellowships for candidates from Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the Caribbean and Pacific Regions (the programme will open to candidates from African SIDS and the Maldives for the 2021-2022 intake). The latter was a commitment in the Government's Strategy for Partnership with SIDS.

The Fellowship Programme is intended to grow further, to approximately 200 by 2025. As per a commitment in the Africa Strategy, approximately 150 of these places will go to Fellows from African countries. A revised and restructured Fellowship Programme will bring together and standardise the different Fellowship streams which exist across DCAD.

#### *Stability Fund*

The Stability Fund is a Departmental budget line used to fund projects related to mediation, conflict prevention and resolution, peacebuilding, disarmament and non-proliferation, prevention of torture and the implementation of Ireland's commitments under UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. The Stability Fund is overseen by a Management Committee co-chaired by the Director General of DCAD and the Political Director.

#### *ICMPS*

The In-Country Micro Project Scheme (ICMPS) administered by GPU enables 15 Missions to support local NGOs in carrying out small development projects. The scheme operates primarily in developing countries where Ireland has diplomatic accreditation, but does not have a bilateral Irish Aid programme. It supports projects that aim to address the root causes of poverty and injustice, promote human rights, enhance livelihood security, improve access to social services and strengthen local capacity and ownership.

## **Humanitarian Unit**

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the world was facing record levels of humanitarian need. OCHA estimate that over 180 million people are currently in need of humanitarian assistance in 57 crisis contexts, while over 79 million people have been displaced, a record level.

There are significant fears that COVID-19 and the associated global shutdown will exacerbate these needs, at a time when economic crises in major donor countries is likely to put strain on aid budgets.

The UN's Humanitarian Agency, UN OCHA, have been leading the international response to the humanitarian crisis, and have published a Global Humanitarian Response Plan. Ireland has supported this plan directly, with over €17 million in COVID specific humanitarian crises, as well as over €40 million in indirect funding to the UN system.

Ireland is recognised as a generous humanitarian donor, with over €180 million in humanitarian assistance in 2018 (and likely similar in 2019, once the full figures are calculated). This includes core funding to the UN system (including the UN's Central Emergency Response Fund and core funding to UNHCR), the Red Cross Movement (including core funding to the ICRC and IFRC), Irish NGOs (through the Humanitarian Partnership Programme), the EU (through assessed contributions to ECHO) and through provision of skilled humanitarian personnel from Ireland's rapid response roster.

As well as core funding, Ireland has also focused on providing funding to the most severe crises, most of which are the result of protracted conflicts. As Syria approaches a decade of conflict, Ireland has contributed over €168 million in humanitarian assistance, our largest ever response to a single conflict. Yemen remains the world's worst humanitarian crisis, with over 24 million in need of assistance, and Ireland provided €5 million in funding in 2020.

Ireland is recognised as a respected voice in the global humanitarian system, thanks to our commitment to the humanitarian principles of independence, neutrality, impartiality and independence, our respect for IHL, and a number of key leadership roles we have played in recent years (including Chairing OCHA's and ICRC's Donor Support Groups, and co-facilitating the New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants).

## **Multilateral UN&IFIs Unit**

### *UN Overview*

Ireland maintains **long-standing partnerships with key UN development system agencies** including UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, UN Women and UNAIDs. This includes engagement in their governance systems, tracking and monitoring performance against, for example, UN Reform (ensuring greater UN agency coherence and effectiveness), the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and Ireland's international development priority areas, outlined in *A Better World*. In 2019, Ireland was the Vice President of the UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS Executive Board.

The UN&IFIs unit mainly provides **core funding** to key partner UN agencies, as part of our good donorship principles (approx. €22.5 million in 2019) as well as targeted funding to Trust Funds such as the Resident Coordinator system, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Ending Violence Against Women, Generation Unlimited and Making Women Count. This funding enables UN agencies to respond with agility to shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic as well as allowing Ireland to amplify and deepen our voice and impact.

Ireland is currently collaborating with **UN Women's Generation Equality Forum** to mark the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration. Ireland's focus is ensuring girl's access to education is embedded in all the pillars of action. Since March 2020, Ireland has been closely engaged with the UN development system in relation to the **COVID-19 pandemic** to ensure immediate response and long-term recovery reach the furthest behind, uphold reform commitments, and protect fragile SDG investments. Support to the **Peacebuilding Fund** (and its Irish Chair) is a priority for 2020.

This unit works closely with colleagues across the Department to coordinate Ireland's active engagement in the **UN High Level Political Forum** (led by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and the Environment, DCCAIE, and meeting in July in a virtual format), **the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)** in September, and our upcoming Security Council tenure. As the SDG focal point for the Department, this unit engages in DCCAIE's SDG Inter-departmental Working Group (IDWG) – with the development of Ireland's next SDG National Implementation Plan at the top of the agenda in the coming period.

## IFIs Overview

Ireland is a member of a number of International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs). This includes the Bretton Woods Institutions (the IMF and the World Bank) as well as several regional MDBs including the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), and most recently the African Development Bank (AfDB). **In 2018, Ireland contributed €28.5 million to the World Bank and €7.3 million to Regional Development Banks.**

While **Department of Finance leads on relations with the IFIs and MDBs**, DFAT provides inputs to ensure consistency with Ireland's international development policy priorities. DFAT also contributes directly to a number Trust Funds for specific development activities administered by the MDBs.

Ireland is closely engaged with the **World Bank, IMF and the other MDBs** in their response to COVID-19. Ireland, through DFAT, has committed over €700,000 to the World Bank for its Social Protection programmes in Sudan and Palestine. **In 2020, Ireland's first single-donor Trust Fund, administered by the ADB**, is providing €2m to support Asian and Pacific Small Island Developing States (SIDS) response to the crisis caused by COVID-19. Established in 2019, the Trust Fund will provide €12m over six years toward *Building Climate Change and Disaster Resilience in SIDS*. **In April 2020, Ireland became a member of the AfDB**. Our engagement in the coming months will focus on themes in areas such as agriculture, private sector engagement, gender equality and climate action.

Through our IFI and MDB partnerships, **we explore opportunities for Irish business and investment in projects across developing countries when appropriate.**

### Multilateral Unit EU

A quarter of Ireland's Official Development Assistance goes through the European Union institutions – the Commission and the European Investment Bank – mostly as assessed contributions. *This amounts to over €200 million in 2020.*

Multilateral Unit – EU in the Development Cooperation and Africa Division in DFAT is the focal point for EU development financing and engagement, working in conjunction with the Perm Rep in Brussels across the Department and with others, and with Missions in partner countries, to ensure that Ireland plays a strong role in shaping and directing, and monitoring

the effectiveness of, EU development efforts. This is significant, as the EU and its Member States contribute over half of all ODA globally.

There are four current processes of import that will constitute much of the agenda over the coming six months.

First, the **EU's collective global response to Covid-19** - encompassing the European Commission, European Investment Bank and Member States – known as *Team Europe*, will be the central topic at the informal FAC-DEV meeting of EU Ministers for International Development, provisionally scheduled for 29 September in Bonn. Work is ongoing in Brussels and across the mission network in Africa to position Ireland as a key supporter of Team Europe.

Secondly, and flowing from that, the budget and plans for the **EU's external financing of development in the MFF 2021-27** is up for final agreement in the coming period. As part of these plans, there is a proposal to create a new, streamlined and more coherent and responsive instrument for EU development funding – the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI). Negotiations are ongoing with the European Parliament on the regulation that will govern this instrument. When EU international development Ministers meet in Brussels in Council formation (Foreign Affairs Council) on 23 November we can expect this process to have been advanced, in the absence of which a transitional budget for 2021 will have to be considered (with programming work at the country level, which Ireland is engaging on, delayed). Of particular interest with regard to Ireland's Security Council membership will be the EU support for peacebuilding and conflict resolution, prominent in the new NDICI instrument.

Thirdly, negotiations are concluding on the planned **new legal treaty between the EU and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP)** group of states, to replace the Cotonou Partnership Agreement of 2000. This will govern the relations between the EU and 79 developing countries - 1.5 billion people in all - spanning political relations, trade and development cooperation. *The Post-Cotonou agreement will require a legislative process in the Oireachtas, as each Member State will need to ratify it.*

Finally, there are a number of related engagements that over the coming period will see engagement by DCAD across DFAT and other Government Departments. DCAD continues to work across the Department and with the Department of Justice and Equality and others on the issue of **migration**, with a focus on addressing the root causes of forced migration.

Ireland is also supporting a number of important ‘**aid for trade**’ initiatives, working with the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation and others on World Trade Organisation (WTO) and other efforts aimed at addressing the trade-related constraints identified by developing and least-developed countries.

### **Policy Unit**

The Policy Unit in Development Cooperation and Africa Division is structured around the policy priorities in *A Better World* as well as the key areas for intervention. As such, the Unit is comprised of the following teams: **Gender, Climate Action, Governance and Protection, Health, Education, Disability, Food (agriculture and nutrition), and Social Protection**. We also have teams working on cross-cutting areas such as **research and evidence**, our **relationship with the OECD Development Assistance Committee**, and **private sector engagement**.

The core functions of the Policy Unit are as follows:

- To represent DFAT in global processes relevant to their areas (for example the World Health Assembly, upcoming Food Systems Summit, UNFCCC COPs, and Commission for the Status of Women).
- To provide technical support to Missions in Africa and other DCAD units which are providing bilateral and multilateral development cooperation, on the specific themes mentioned above.
- Working with key policy and research partners, to ensure our programmes are based on international best practice and solid evidence.
- To provide financial support to major global thematic funds, such as the Global Fund for AIDS, TB and Malaria, GAVI the Global Vaccine Alliance and the Global Partnership for Education.
- Working across Government on Policy Coherence for sustainable development issues, as well as being the secretariat for the International Development Committee, a cross-Governmental body responsible for oversight of Official Development Assistance and policy coherence.
- Where possible and relevant, we also lead on so-called ‘institutional partnerships’, where Irish organisations provide technical input to counterparts overseas, such as work undertaken by the HSE in Mozambique, and support to a number of countries from Teagasc.

Within this remit, policy teams are actively engaged with international counterparts within the EU and the OECD, and in many cases Ireland plays a leadership role. Our work is intended to add value to existing cooperation partnerships, bilateral, multilateral or with NGO partners. We also work closely across the Department with key counterparts such as the Policy Planning Unit, Conflict Resolution Unit, Human Rights Unit and UN Policy, on thematically-relevant issues.

Across all of our thematic areas of focus, is a commitment to reaching the Furthest Behind First, and we are leading on the implementation of this commitment, as well as efforts at mainstreaming climate, gender and disability across all of our work. As part of the commitment to ‘doing things differently’ in *A Better World*, work on Research, Evidence, Knowledge and Learning is ongoing, as well as exploring opportunities to work more closely with the private sector.

We are currently giving consideration to the Programme for Government’s commitment to creating a dedicated Climate Unit within DFAT, and how best to resource and structure that unit.

### **Civil Society and Development Education Unit**

Partnership with civil society has always been a key element of Ireland’s overseas development programme. Ireland is consistently among the top donors of bilateral development assistance to and through civil society. The high quality of Ireland’s partnerships with civil society organisations (CSOs) is recognised as one of three key achievements of our development programme by the DAC Peer Review, April 2020. Since 2018, Ireland has been playing a lead role among donors in seeking to better link funding to CSOs to policy goals such as improved civil society space. DAC donors contribute over \$20 billion to CSOs each year but this contribution is inadequately reflected in the SDGs and the impact of this funding is limited by the increasing restrictions on CSOs around the world. Ireland will co-host a virtual event on this issue on 16 July during the UN High-level Political Forum (HLPF) on the SDGs which envisages a short keynote address on this topic by the Minister.

In 2020, over €90 million of Irish Aid funding will be channelled through 90 partners for long-term development objectives and development education. The Civil Society and Development Education Unit (CSDEU) manages these partnerships at HQ level. Funding is provided to CSOs through a range of multi-annual competitive funding schemes. This

funding is used to support education, social protection, health, agriculture, governance and human rights programmes in over 70 countries as well as for development education across the formal and informal sectors on the island of Ireland.

COVID-19 has delayed three key policy updates in this area, which are however, planned for delivery by end-2020:

- an update of the 2008 Irish Aid Civil Society policy;
- a mid-term review of the Irish Aid 2017-23 Development Education Strategy; and
- a review of the Government's 2013 overseas volunteering initiative;

Key challenges for Ireland's development sector include the need to balance public and political demands for greater accountability and due diligence against the imperative to support people living in fragile and conflict affected states where governance is poor. The increasing scrutiny of the NGO sector has seen the Department increase the level of due diligence in grant management.

COVID19 has significantly impacted the work of Irish NGOs including reduced fundraising income. The umbrella group representing Irish development NGOs – Dóchas – is conscious of these challenges and the need to continue to engage public support for Ireland's development programme. An early opportunity for the development sector to engage with the Minister, through Dóchas, would be a priority for Q3.

Ireland's flagship multiannual development and humanitarian funding programmes, due to finish in 2021 have recently been extended for one year due to COVID-19. Work is currently underway for a comprehensive evaluation of these two schemes and in designing a new 5-year funding programme of c. €420 million from 2023. This is an opportunity for Ireland explore designing an innovative and flexible integrated development and humanitarian programme *A Better World Programme Fund*.

Ireland's development education programme gives the Department significant reach across Ireland with over 450,000 learners in formal and informal education reached since 2017. There are plans to rebrand this programme in 2020 as a Global Citizenship education programme and to increase structured engagement on common goals with other departments especially D/Education. The Minister would usually speak often at development education

events in Ireland – as these move online there will continue to be opportunities to engage with a wide and diverse audience through virtual means in the short-term including an early opportunity to launch the book ‘Changing perceptions of Africa in schools’ in September 2020.

**Development Cooperation and Africa Unit  
June 2020**