

## **Aid from Ireland Works – at multiple levels...**

There are many ways in which Ireland's development assistance is helping to bring about change in the lives of poor people in developing countries.

While the Government's official aid programme works especially through partner governments and international organisations, such as the European Union and United Nations agencies, it also supports the works of Ireland's development NGOs and missionary organisations.

Ireland's non-governmental organisations (NGOs) work in many different and complementary ways, and at very different levels – whether directly with community and other groups, in the delivery of basic services such as health, education or water, or advocating for 'duty bearers' (often Governments) to ensure the rights of poor and marginalised people and groups.

In addition, many NGOs play a role in informing public policy with NGO experience, perspectives and proposals, or finding sources of finance, skills or technical expertise to support the initiatives of people and organisations in developing countries that are promoting human development in its many different aspects.

Below are some of the examples of positive changes that Irish NGOs are bringing in the lives of groups, communities and societies:

- ✓ Children in Crossfire (CIC) has trained and provided resources to teachers on the integration of visually impaired children into mainstream education in The Gambia. CIC's advocacy work at national level also supported implementation of the government's integrated education policy and ratification by The Gambia of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- ✓ ChildFund has contributed to improving the health of vulnerable children and women in rural Guinea through advocacy for an action programme and legislation. ChildFund has been instrumental in pushing the publication of a Child Rights Bill and helped develop a harmonised national plan for combating female genital mutilation.
- ✓ In 2009, Concern Worldwide reached 4.2 million people directly with its 'food, income and markets' initiative aimed at giving poor people greater control over their lives and resources, and thereby access to an adequate standard of living. Community management of acute malnutrition, one of the major innovations in the treatment of acute malnutrition in recent years, was pioneered by Concern and Valid International (a Cork-based organisation) and is now accepted by the United Nations as best international practice.

- ✓ In South America, Palestine and West Africa, International Service Ireland (ISI) has carried out capacity building work for grassroots organisations to address the rights of people with disabilities. These programmes give people living with disability skills and tools to earn a living and live independently, helping them participate more fully in their communities and changing attitudes towards disability.
- ✓ Link Community Development helped Masindi District schools in western Uganda to move from 62<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> in national education league tables. External evaluation showed that much of the improvement was down to training of school managers, teachers and district officers, supported by LCD, plus regular monitoring and inspections by the district office. The evaluation noted results in project schools 50% higher than in comparable schools, and that LCD contributed positively to systemic and sustainable educational improvement in Masindi.
- ✓ Christian Aid has carried out advocacy work at Irish and EU levels on the issue of tax justice, a cornerstone of generating adequate financing for development work. This has helped put the need for country-by-country accounting standards firmly on the agenda as an important issue: progress on this can provide much more, and more sustainable, finance for development in the long term – and make developing country governments more accountable to their people.

## Aid from Ireland Works – meet some of those who benefit...

- **Alice Abongokara** is a 19-year-old teenage mother from a low-income family which migrated to Masindi District in Western Uganda 20 years ago as a result of violent conflict in Northern Uganda. Alice's family depends on small-scale agriculture on rented land for its livelihood. ChildFund supported Alice through an 8-month vocational training course in tailoring at Kyeema Vocational Training Institute in 2008 and 2009. After start-up assistance, she has now established a tailoring business in her village and is able to meet her own basic food and shelter needs, as well as pay school fees for her siblings. Alice has also joined a tailors group, which gives her access to loans and helps her market her products.
- When she was diagnosed HIV-positive, **Nasira\*** (not her real name) was almost exiled from her village in Mali, as neighbours and villagers feared infection. As she started to develop AIDS, Nasira and her husband had increasing difficulty getting food to eat. In 2008, Plan-Ireland supported four local NGOs with a programme to raise awareness of HIV and AIDS, tackle stigma, and support income generation for people living with HIV. Nasira, now on ARV drug treatment, has avoided passing HIV to her children and leads local HIV information education activities. She also runs a start-up fruit and vegetable stall, and is helping other local women access small loans. Nasira is now viewed as a positive role model in her village.
- **37-year-old Mohammed** was a truck driver in Sierra Leone for many years before going blind. Lacking family support or social safety nets, he had to turn to begging on the streets of Freetown to survive. Eventually he joined a training programme run by the Sierra Leone Association for the Blind (SLAB), supported by Sightsavers, which offered the many blind people begging in Freetown the chance to learn a new skill. Mohammed learned to make soap and has set up a small business, which he says has given him not just an income but also dignity. Mohammed has learned to read Braille, is employed by the Ministry of Education to train other blind people to make soap, and is held up as an example of self-advancement and independent living.

- In Petifu, a rural village in north-central Sierra Leone, teacher and health coordinator **Abdul R Sherry** emphasises that although a cholera outbreak has afflicted many of the nearby villages, Petifu has no reported cases. Abdul credits the School Health Clubs, started by Concern and a local partner, Pikin to Pikin. “Students now know how to take care of their environment,” says Abdul. “Because of the information the children get on food hygiene, they bring it to their homes and tell their parents about covering the food and washing hands.” Children received materials to improve school surroundings, and went on to improve the village the village environment beyond the project period.
- **Prudence Kyarisiima**, a 16-year-old pupil at Ibugwe Primary School, in North Rukiga, Southwest Uganda, remembers when awful, unsanitary toilet facilities meant girls were embarrassed to use them and often dropped out of school as a result. With new classrooms and latrines built with World Vision Ireland support, school life has improved significantly for Prudence and her friends. Improving school facilities has increased enrolment, girls’ absenteeism rate has fallen by 20% and school completion is up.
- **Mrs Gulsom** in the remote North Western province of Ghor in Afghanistan, saw her husband leave her and deny her access to the family farm when she did not bear him a son. Taking part in a project for particularly marginalised people, run by Christian Aid’s partner organisation Shuhuda, she was allocated four sheep and other project supports. From there, her life has completely changed: she now owns 14 sheep, produces milk and yoghurt, and sells the surplus on the local market. Her family’s health status has improved and she is hopeful for her daughters’ future, especially as she is now able to send one of them to school. Crucially, she has found new status in her locality as a farmer and, as such, the community has ruled that she now has the right to the family land her husband had denied her.
- After high school in Kenya, **Amina Farid** got training from Camara in computer hardware and software, including open-source software such as Linux. From there, she went on to do a diploma in Information Technology from Mombasa Aviation and now plans to go on to do a degree in IT. Students such as Amina, progressing through education, are critical to female empowerment in developing countries, and to their taking advantage of the opportunities technology offers to leapfrog forward in human development.