

## WELCOMING THE 2011 FELLOWS



**35 new Irish Aid supported fellows were recently given a warm welcome to Ireland.**

All of Irish Aid's partner countries had at least one awardee beginning their studies in Dublin, Cork or Galway this year - 23 through the Fellowship Training Programme (pictured top) and 12 through the IDEAS Programme (right, with Frances Collins, Irish Aid).



Another 18 Fellowship Training Programme awardees are being supported by Irish Aid to study in their home country or in the region.

[» Read more](#)

## BUILDING AN ONLINE ALUMNI NETWORK

When we pressed 'send' to launch the alumni newsletter in December, we had over 450 former fellows on the contact list. Happily, at least two thirds of those emails seem to have reached a live address, even with records going back more than a decade.

Many positive messages and good wishes were received in return, for which we were very grateful. We enjoyed hearing updates on careers and achievements, as well as fond memories of time spent in Ireland.

What's more, a new Facebook group has provided an additional way for alumni to connect and has allowed us to re-establish contact with several former fellows for whom we had no working email address. (One of them gives us an update on p2).

Whether you're online a little or a lot, signing up is a great way to keep a link.

[Click here to join other Alumni on Facebook](#)

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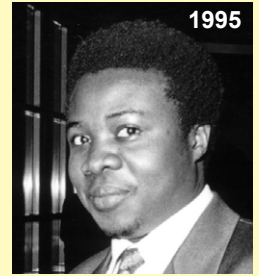
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**New minister  
gives poverty fight  
commitment**

### BEEN PUBLISHED?

Have you had an article published in an academic journal since you completed your fellowship? We'd be grateful if you could email [alumni@icosirl.ie](mailto:alumni@icosirl.ie) with details of any such article from the last three years. We'd like to compile a listing to make available.

# Staying connected: Peter Balimunsi



In 2011, almost a decade and a half after completing his fellowship, Peter Balimunsi joined other alumni as part of the newly established Facebook group. »[The Link](#) caught up with him to find out why his fellowship alumni connection is still going strong.

In 1994, Peter took time out from his role as Project Manager in Uganda's National Water and Sewerage Corporation to begin a Masters in Development Studies at UCD.

## What were you hoping to get from the course?

My mind then was focused on project management, so I was looking for courses that had that element and the course at UCD had a very good component called Project Analysis.

## How did it go?

When I went to do the course, I found wider and more interesting dimensions. It aroused my interest in the economic progress of developing countries, like Uganda, and in Development Economics. I found the course very satisfying and it made me a more rounded professional. I remember it brought together many people from all over the world – from South America, continental Europe, Asia and Ireland. The internationality was very good.

I liked the kindness and warm hospitality of the Irish people. The other thing I will never forget is the cold weather. It was my first time to get exposed to that kind of weather!

## What about your return to Uganda?

When I went back to my job, my organisation was receiving a lot of donor finances, both from multilateral organisations



and bilateral organisations: a big programme from the World Bank and the European Union, and something beginning from France and from Germany. So they opened an office called the European Union Assistance and Bilateral Programmes and I was selected to head that office because of my course, which had an element of international relations. I think it helped me to manage that programme very well.

Later, I was promoted to head the whole Planning and Capital Development division which was looking after all the projects in the corporation.

## You went on to further studies as well...

Before I left UCD, I asked Dr Helen O'Neill [then Head of the Centre for Development Studies] how I could network with other professionals in the area. She advised me to join the Development Studies Association for the UK and Ireland. I also began looking for a course in Development Economics, so I took a postgraduate diploma at the University of London which prepared me for an MSc in Development Finance. I completed in 2004.

## You tracked down the alumni network online. Why is the connection important to you?

It's very difficult to locate colleagues of mine from that course, and even Ugandans who have been to Ireland are difficult to meet unless you have some kind of association. Beyond studying, I think it's a good thing to further the relations between the two countries. So I see it as something very useful. Whenever we're invited to the Irish Embassy in Uganda I always attend and participate. It's good that you can connect online and you can also link on the ground.

I'm very grateful to the Irish Government for supporting my postgraduate study. It has been very useful for my career; everything I'm doing now has a very strong link with the course I did in Ireland, both in my professional practice and my academic advancement.

## Tell us about your future plans...

I intend to concentrate on consultancy services and university teaching in the area of development. When I previously attempted to begin a PhD, I was finding a lot of conflict with my working time so I decided to leave my job last year and work in consultancy for more flexibility. My thesis will be in the field of development, building on the UCD course.





# Fellows and Irish Aid link up in Limerick

**Tham Nguyen reflects on a seminar held to strengthen partnership links between Study Fellows and Irish Aid and to facilitate information sharing on development strategies.**

Dublin was in spring time with beautiful flowers blossoming everywhere and the sun out until 9pm. I had also finished most of my classes at school and been working for a company project. It was also the time when Irish Aid gathered all fellows who receive scholarships from Irish Aid at its headquarters in Limerick.

At 7am, I was ready at the office of ICOS (Irish Council for International Students). It took us 3 hours by bus to travel from Dublin to Limerick.

This is the second year that Irish Aid has held this event and it hopefully will become an annual event for fellows to meet up with each other and with Irish Aid staff.

The seminar was to discuss key issues in partner countries and the areas Irish Aid is working on: Poverty and Hunger; HIV/AIDS and Health; Development; Environment; and Education. These focuses are delivered by three main programmes: Fellowship, IDEAS and Strategic Cooperation.

I represented IDEAS scholars (Irish Development Experience Sharing Programme), giving a short presentation about my studies in Ireland to other fellows, Irish Aid Staff and the Minister of State for Trade and Development, Jan O'Sullivan T.D. It was also a chance for me to say thank you to my sponsor and Irish Aid staff who contributed to creating the IDEAS programme.

Moreover, I also had a great time with other fellows coming from Ethiopia, Malawi, Uganda and Zambia. They listened and laughed with me for every tiny thing I spoke. After that, they also hugged me, picked me



Minister Jan O'Sullivan T.D. (left) with presenters Tham Nguyen (far right), Lina Simpson Mbewe (Zambia) and Solomon Bekele (Ethiopia)

up and complimented me about how passionate I was when I talked about the plane in the sky which used to carry a little girl's dream; or about how intensive my MBA programme at UCD Smurfit Business School is; or about the environment I had with my MBA classmates.

Last but not least, with these seminars, I know that Irish Aid is trying hard to create the alumni network for Fellows to connect with each other and with Irish Aid when they go back to their home countries. This was an important event to start that connection.

## THE IDEAS PROGRAMME AND VIETNAM

Irish Aid's IDEAS Programme aims to share lessons from Ireland's economic and social development and promote the exchange of knowledge and experience in macro-economic governance. It began in 2009, based on a partnership with UCD's Michael Smurfit Graduate Business School. Each year, up to 10 fellows are supported to study business-related masters' programmes in Ireland, after which they seek to make a strong contribution to the development of Vietnam's private sector.



2010-11 Study Fellow group with Minister Jan O'Sullivan and Sheila Power, Director of ICOS

# Embassy Updates:

## TIMOR-LESTE

A reception at the Irish Embassy in Timor Leste on 19th November 2010 offered Timorese with an Irish connection the chance to meet - and take early steps toward establishing an alumni chapter.

The gathering brought together former Irish Aid Study Fellows and other Timorese who had studied in Ireland, along with prospective fellowship students and members of the country's Irish community.

**A similar event is planned for November 2011. Please contact the embassy for further information.**



## MALAWI

On 24th August, Ireland's Ambassador to Malawi hosted a reception for the latest group of Study Fellows. Four were preparing to depart for Ireland and another was soon to commence her studies at home.

Pictured below from left to right: Steven Nyirenda (Masters of Public Advocacy and Activism at NUI Galway), Fyawupi Mwafango (MSc in Environment and Development at Trinity College Dublin), Adrian Fitzgerald (Head of Development, Embassy of Ireland), Prisca Kanjere (MA in Economics at Chancellor College, Malawi), Charles Chabuka (MA in Gender, Globalisation and Rights at NUI Galway) and Stern Kita (MSc in Environment and Development at TCD).



**>> The Link warmly invites further submissions from Embassies/Missions to [alumni@icosirl.ie](mailto:alumni@icosirl.ie)**



## College Spotlight:

# University College Dublin (UCD)



**Over the past 15 years, UCD has hosted more IrishAid fellows than any other institution - making up more than 300 alumni across a wide range of disciplines, including agriculture, development, business, education and public health.**

Belfield, the university's spacious campus on the edge of Dublin, became its main home in the 1960s, just over a century after its founding. Thus, unlike many Irish campuses, it is characterised by modern architecture throughout. At its heart are the Newman Building, the James Joyce Library and the UCD lake, complete with resident swans and fountains in the centre. Over recent years several hi-tech new buildings have been added and UCD has adopted a new logo as it seeks to position itself as "one of Europe's leading research-intensive universities".



The lake, James Joyce Library and Administration buildings

UCD's Michael Smurfit Graduate Business School is located approximately two miles away from the main campus in the coastal town of Blackrock. It occupies a 19th century red-brick building (formerly used as a teacher-training college) as well as several newer additions. Since 2009, it has hosted students supported by Irish Aid's IDEAS Programme for Vietnam (see p3).



The new 'Global Lounge' to promote internationalisation

Overall, UCD is home to 25,000 students - almost 5,000 of them international students. In early 2011, UCD opened a dedicated space for the promotion of internationalisation on the Belfield campus - [the 'Global Lounge'](#). It has become a popular hang out for Irish and International students alike.

On the latest world university rankings, UCD is placed [159th by Times Higher Education](#) and [134th by QS](#).

## Irish Aid Alumni and UCD

Over the last decade, Irish Aid has sponsored students from all of its partner countries to study at UCD.

Zambia leads the list with over 50 fellows attending the college during that time, more than half of whom studied programmes in the field of teaching and education.

Amongst all fellowship alumni, Development Studies and Rural Development were the most commonly undertaken courses, though many other subjects have featured strongly.



Michael Smurfit Graduate Business School

## NEXT ISSUE:



NUI Galway  
OÉ Gaillimh

# Minister O'Sullivan affirms Government's commitment to fight against global poverty



Soon after taking office, new Minister of State for Trade and Development, Jan O'Sullivan, T.D., said she was determined that the fight against poverty and hunger in the developing world would be at the heart of Ireland's foreign policy.

Addressing a major conference in Dublin on the future of development aid in March, she also said the Government was committed to Ireland's development programme and to the 0.7% GNP target.

"We are determined that the fight against poverty, hunger and inequality in the world should be at the centre of Ireland's foreign policy," Minister O'Sullivan said. "Ireland will continue to work relentlessly towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 by focusing our aid on the poorest people and communities, intensifying efforts to reduce poverty and hunger, tackling climate change and promoting education, especially for girls."

She also committed to exploring the links between trade and development, the two key strands of her ministerial portfolio.

"I also hope to explore further the crucial issue of women in economic development," said Minister O'Sullivan. "The majority of smallholder farmers in poor countries in Africa are women. When women can acquire assets, earn incomes, accumulate savings and have control over resources,

they prioritise helping themselves and their families. Even small resources can make a significant difference."

## Minister visits Malawi and Mozambique



Minister of State for Trade and Development, Jan O'Sullivan T.D., visits an Irish Aid-supported health clinic in Niassa, Mozambique.

In June, Minister O'Sullivan undertook a 5 day visit to two of Ireland's partner countries in Africa.

In Malawi, she saw Irish Aid-supported programmes to reduce hunger, improve agricultural productivity and tackle HIV and AIDS. Travelling on to Mozambique, she spent three days examining Ireland's role in reducing HIV rates and improving basic education and healthcare for the most vulnerable communities.

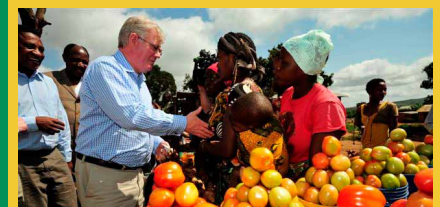
During her visit she held high-level political discussions with the Governments of both countries and Irish NGOs.

## Nutrition 'central' to Tanzania partnership

Ireland's Tánaiste (Deputy Prime Minister) and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Eamon Gilmore TD, and U.S. Secretary of State Hilary Clinton co-hosted a High Level Forum in Tanzania on 12 June to look at progress on scaling up nutrition programmes globally and at Irish-US cooperation on the issue.

Mr Gilmore said: "Our work with the US will help ensure that children in some of the poorest countries in the world, including Tanzania, get the nutrition they need to survive, and to lead healthy and productive lives".

During a 4-day visit, the Tánaiste (pictured, below) also discussed hunger more generally with the Secretary of State and the Tanzanian Government as well as progress and the challenges facing Tanzania of hunger and food security.



Nutrition is a key driver of change in relation to reducing hunger and will be a central thread in the new country strategy that will guide Ireland's partnership with Tanzania for the next five years.

» **The Link** is published by ICOS on behalf of Irish Aid.

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