

VIETNAM-IRELAND ALUMNI NETWORK LAUNCHED

A Vietnam-Ireland Alumni Network was launched at the 2012 St. Patrick's Day Reception, with Deputy Prime Minister Hoang Trung Hai - who studied at both Trinity College Dublin and University College Dublin - taking up the role of its Honorary President.

The Deputy Prime Minister strongly supported the alumni idea in order to promote education links between Vietnam and Ireland.

The network currently has over 50 members, some 40 of whom were sponsored for postgraduate courses by Irish Aid. Its mission

is to promote mutually beneficial networking among members including social, cultural and educational interaction. The standing committee consists of 10 people from the North and South of Vietnam.

The Embassy maintains direct contact with scholarship alumni

from the Irish Aid Fellowship Training Programme, the Ireland-Vietnam Blood-borne Virus Initiative (IVVI) at UCD and the Ireland Vietnam development exchange programme, IDEAS.

Vietnamese students in Ireland have performed very well

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From left to right: **Nguyen Thi Huong** - Embassy staff, Trinity MBA sponsored by ESBI; **Vu Quynh Phuong** - Fellowship Training Programme; **Luu Phuong Quynh** - Ireland Vietnam Blood Borne Virus Initiative (IVVI); **Ambassador Damien Cole**; **Mr. Bui Thanh Son** - Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs; **Nguyen Mai Chi** - Embassy staff, DCU Human Resources, Fellowship Training Programme; **Do Kim Toan** - IDEAS Programme; **Do Thi Diem Trinh** - IVVI; **Le Hoang** - IDEAS Programme

INSIDE



**Fellows discuss
Irish Aid strategies
for development**



**Visit cements links
for longest running
aid programme**



**Ireland
celebrates
Africa Day**

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Vietnam-Ireland Alumni Network Launched (continued from p1)

academically and are consistently positive about Ireland.

Alumni have assisted the Embassy in media campaigns to promote Ireland. Students in Ireland assist Vietnamese delegations when they travel to Ireland as interpreters or tour guides. Alumni have also volunteered to support the Embassy in a number of events. They shared their experience of studying and living in Ireland at a training course for Vietnamese business associations and entrepreneurs, funded under Irish Aid's IDEAS Programme

earlier this year. They assist with annual pre-departure events for Irish Aid's scholarship recipients and will meet the Vietnamese Paralympics delegation before they travel to Ireland in July 2012 for training.

The Embassy has organised follow-up events at the Ambassador's Residence after the launch of the Vietnam-Ireland Alumni Network and aims to organise occasional get-togethers while encouraging the Network to develop its own activities and programme of events.

GROWTH MARKET

A growing number of Vietnamese students travel to Ireland to study each year. Enterprise Ireland has prioritised Vietnam as a market for third level education, recognising the dynamic alumni community as an important part of its promotion strategy. With Asia strategy funding, a website was set up in 2009 with links to all the major educational institutions in Ireland.

Limerick Seminar 2012

Fellows discuss Irish Aid priorities

Study Fellows travelled to Limerick in April for the annual meeting with Irish Aid staff - a day of information sharing and discussion on development priorities.

Fellows were extended a warm welcome to the event by Ireland's Minister for Trade and Development, Joe Costello T.D., who reflects on the day on p3.

Three fellows presented on their studies and wider experiences in Ireland and the Minister took up comments from agriculture student Dagmawi Melaku, relating them to his own recent visit to projects in the Tigray region of Ethiopia where environmental concerns are being mainstreamed.

The structure of the day reflected Irish Aid's 'programmatic approach', with sessions allowing Irish Aid staff and Study Fellows to engage and reflect further on a number of thematic priorities.

The afternoon began with a question and answer session

Thematic sessions:

- Governance and Human Rights
- Environment, Climate Change and Agriculture
- HIV/AIDS and Health
- Education
- Private Sector development

focused on Ireland's approach to improving trade and investment linkages with Africa, as set out in a strategy paper launched in

September 2011. This document outlines a comprehensive framework for Ireland's business, political and development relations with Africa over the coming years.

Irish Aid's Country Strategy Papers were also explored through workshops for fellows from Vietnam, Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia and Ethiopia.



2011-12 Irish Aid Fellowship Training Programme recipients, pictured with Minister Costello and ICOS staff.

“Building a bond that lasts a lifetime”

Mr Joe Costello T.D., Ireland’s Minister for Trade and Development, outlines the value the Government places on Irish Aid Fellowships, the goals of Ireland’s Africa Strategy and the particular importance of the connections fostered by alumni networks.

Thank you for affording me the opportunity to contribute to this issue of the Irish Aid Fellowship Alumni Newsletter. The Fellowship Training Programme has been a key component of Irish Aid’s support for capacity building since it began back in 1974. In recent years we have taken steps to ensure that the programme is even more closely tied to the poverty reduction priorities and strategies of our partner countries. I am keen that this programme will also facilitate a strong personal and professional alumni network that endures beyond the period of study.

In April, this year I was delighted to be able to attend the annual seminar for fellows currently studying under the Fellowship Training Programme, which was held in Irish Aid’s offices in Limerick. The event was a wonderful opportunity for me personally to meet with fellows and hear about their experiences of studying in Ireland, which were all very positive. It was particularly interesting to listen to the variety of perspectives on development issues, expressed by fellows from different countries. I was struck by the high level of enthusiasm and commitment of fellows to development in their own countries. The contribution made by fellows throughout the day and their active engagement were key to making the event a great success.

One of the areas I spoke about during the seminar was the Africa Strategy, which was launched in September 2011. The Africa Strategy recognises Ireland’s changing relationship with Africa and provides the framework to deepen our engagement at all levels with the continent. The Strategy acknowledges that, as Africa develops and changes, Ireland needs to realise a maturing of its relations with Africa and with individual African countries. The Strategy provides a framework for a coherent approach to our political, development, and business relations with African countries. It recognises the fact that the leaders



of many African countries and businesses are keen to foster opportunities for expanded trade and investment ties, and to move towards a situation where Africa reduces its dependency on aid. As members of the Irish Aid fellowship alumni you are ideally placed to help us realise our vision as set out in the Africa Strategy. I am confident that through the alumni we will continue to build mutually beneficial relationships that will lead to the building of capacity for positive and sustainable development.

I want to acknowledge the establishment of the Vietnam Ireland Alumni Network and in particular the role of Deputy Prime Minister Hoang Trung Hai as the alumni chapter’s Honorary President. Irish Embassies abroad are committed to supporting country networks, such as this one in Vietnam, in any way they can and I would encourage you to use the opportunity of the alumni to continue your engagement with the Irish Aid programme and indeed more generally with Ireland. It is clear to me that Ireland’s Fellowship Training Programme is making a significant contribution to how we support our partner organisations at country level through increasing the specialist knowledge available to them.

I have no doubt that fellows of 2011 / 2012 will, like those before, make a valuable contribution to the economic growth and wellbeing of their societies. I hope that every fellow will benefit greatly, both professionally and personally, from your studies and that it will build a bond with Ireland and the Irish Aid Programme that lasts a lifetime.



Spotlight on: Environment and Climate Change

A new feature series in »[The Link](#) taking each of Irish Aid's thematic priorities in turn

Irish Aid's policy on the environment is guided by its 'Environmental Policy for Sustainable Development' document which came into force in 2007.

The overall environmental policy goal is "To promote environmentally sustainable development that is consistent with the economic, social and environmental needs and priorities of people in developing countries and contributes to poverty reduction".

Within Irish Aid's development programme, the environment remains one of four priority policy issues and financial support to countering the adverse impacts of environmental degradation and climate change continues to strengthen.

The value of Irish Aid support to environment centred programmes was approximately €30 million in 2011 and it is planned that 2012 support to environment and climate change activities will be at a similar level. While most of the programmes supported have the environment



Zamuge Wanbera tending a tree nursery in the Bale Mountains, Ethiopia

as a substantive objective, an increasing number have the environment and climate change as specific objectives.

At a bi-lateral level, in 2011, Irish Aid provided financial support to programmes having specific or indirect environment and climate change objectives in Ethiopia, Lesotho, Vietnam, Mozambique, Malawi, South Africa, Tanzania, Timor-Leste, Uganda and Zambia.

Specific projects supported by Irish Aid include an award-winning watershed management intervention in the Tigray Region of Ethiopia, a livelihoods 'Productive Safety Nets' programme of public works, also in Ethiopia, support to a Clean Cook Stove project in Malawi that aims to increase fuel efficiency and provide small quantities of electricity to households and assistance to disaster prevention in Mozambique through support to the Disaster Risk Reduction agency (INGC).

At a multi-lateral level, in 2011, Irish Aid supported the

work of a number of leading global environment and development agencies including the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), the World Resources Institute (WRI) and the LDC Expert Group of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC-LEG).

Overall, Ireland is committed to assisting global efforts to address the adverse impacts of climate change. In late 2009 the Irish Government committed to the provision of up to €100 million to developing countries for climate actions in the period 2010-2012 as our contribution to the global commitment to provide US\$30 billion in fast start finance over the period. Ireland's support is provided through a mix of new and additional funding including €33 million provided by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government and through the climate relevant funding within Irish Aid's development programmes.



Erosion protection measures in Ethiopia - photo Tara Shine

Staying connected: **Victor Makasa**

Zambian Victor Makasa attended the 2001-02 Masters in Rural Development programme at UCD, supported by Irish Aid. »The Link asked him to reflect on his studies, a decade back in the field and memories of Ireland.



What was your work role before you came to Ireland?

I was with the Ministry of Agriculture as an extension methodologist, working with farmers, giving advice, developing both agricultural and fisheries packages. I worked in Mumbwa District with people on the ground and was in charge of all the field staff in various blocks and camps, helping them in all the extension issues, in crops and livestock as well as fisheries.

Tell us about your studies and how they helped...

Studying Rural Development at UCD suited very well the work I was doing back home advising rural small-scale farmers. I did a course in research methods and also in communications which has been very important in terms of how I relate with the farmers so that I have an effect on them. At the time, issues of 'participatory extension' were key - in other words, providing advisory services that emphasised farmers' participation. There was a paradigm shift away from the older method of 'Training and Visit' that the World Bank had propagated. So the course in Ireland sharpened my skills in how I worked with the extension workers in the field and the farmers. Issues of food security and nutritional security were also central – as they still are. On returning to my role with the Ministry in 2002, I was able

to conduct workshops for staff in the district and so transferred the knowledge to my juniors.

How has your career progressed since then?

2004 co-incided with the coming of the Agricultural Support Programme (ASP) funded by the Swedish International Development Agency. This was implemented through the Ministry but with a separate management unit and I was asked to join because of my experience in terms of building capacity and helping to transfer the knowledge to the farmers. I was given an area in central Zambia as Team Leader and worked supporting interventions aimed at helping improve food and nutritional security as well as income amongst farmers. The aim was to transform the way agriculture was done, from the traditional point of view toward small-scale farming as a business, with farmers as entrepreneurs. Evaluations proved it had been very successful when it came to an end in 2008.

And then your work took you on to the national level?

Yes. I was called by Natural Resources International of the UK to help set up a programme in Zambia called Research Into Use (RIU), which was aimed at 'scaling up' use of innovative technologies and approaches among small scale farmers. So

much research is done both by national and international research institutions but it just gathers dust on the shelves – so RIU was looking at how can we improve the uptake amongst the end-users so that it contributes to poverty reduction. I was Country Co-ordinator for Zambia. We went up to last year in July and, although we started later than in other countries, we were able to make some good impacts.



Victor (left) talks to the Minister at the RIU stand during the 2009 National Symposium on Agriculture

At policy level, this work meant that I was invited to go and support the 'Extension Harmonisation' process going on nationally with the Ministry because of the experience that we had as a programme in rolling out district innovation platforms that bring together various extension service providers – public, private and NGOs or civil society driven extension services.

What's your focus right now?

This year, I was appointed Programme Manager for the United States African Development Foundation support to Zambia. It is »

Victor Makasa (continued from p5)

implemented through the Zambia Agribusiness Technical Assistance Centre (ZATAC) and we assist marginalised and rural groups with business and finance capacity to develop successful and sustainable enterprises and improve their standard of living. Currently we're supporting 33 projects across the country, including the rice sub-sector, small-scale dairy, oil seeds, fisheries and pineapples.

I've also felt a need to work in developing human resources that are required within the country, so in 2011 I lectured part-time at Mulungushi University

in Agricultural Development Economics.

Tell us a little about your hopes for the future...

My passion still lies in helping the rural poor and I would like to support the agricultural sector to a level where it realises its commercial potential. The potential is so high and I would like to be a part of the transformation of agriculture so that it improves its contribution to the Gross Domestic Product.

Finally, what are your strongest memories of Ireland?

"When I came it was very cold and chilly - but after a while I got to like it."

Thinking back, I remember Dublin city. I remember St Patrick's day. I loved the weather – I got used to it. When I came it was very cold and chilly but after I stayed there for a while I got to like it. Each time I communicate with people there I remember the many good things. The people were very nice, very welcoming. When I returned here people were saying you sound Irish because I kept using Irish terms!

I hope one day I can come back – maybe to do my PhD.

Visit cements bilateral links for Ireland's longest running aid programme

His Majesty King Letsie III and Her Majesty Queen Masenate Mohato Seeiso of the Kingdom of Lesotho paid an official visit to Ireland from the 20th-22nd May 2012. The main focus of the visit was on consolidating the strong bilateral links which exist between Ireland and Lesotho.

The King and Queen met with the President who hosted a lunch at Áras an Uachtaráin, and with Minister of State for Trade and Development, Joe Costello T.D., who hosted an official dinner at Iveagh House on Monday 21st May. The delegation also met with the small Lesotho Community in Ireland, as well as those who provide support to Lesotho or have business links with the country.

Amongst other engagements, they visited a market garden and



Minister for Trade and Development, Joe Costello T.D. with His Majesty King Letsie III of Lesotho during the recent official visit

a community school in North County Dublin, both of which have links with Lesotho, and the national control centre at Eirgrid which manages electricity transmission in Ireland, as well as the Guinness Storehouse.

Lesotho is Ireland's longest running bilateral aid programme

dating from its establishment in 1975. Almost €200m has been provided in aid by Ireland since then. Lesotho has benefitted in the past from substantial Irish volunteer engagement through the former Agency for Personal Service Overseas which, in the course of its history, provided many volunteers to work there.

College Spotlight: **NUI Galway**



NUI Galway
OÉ Gaillimh

Down the years, Irish Aid Fellowships have brought a steady flow of scholars heading westwards to the Republic of Ireland's third city - Galway.

National University of Ireland, Galway opened its doors in 1849, when a first intake of just 63 scholars began their studies in the impressive setting of the Quadrangle, a building enclosing a central courtyard on all four sides. It was modelled on one of the colleges at Oxford University and remains in use today as an administrative hub.



The Quadrangle - where it all began [Photo: Phalinn Ooi]

The design of a new Engineering building took the 'Quad' as inspiration for what was described as a 21st century reinterpretation, including 'cutting-edge' green technology. Other recently added buildings include Health Sciences, the School of Business and a modern sports centre.



The Health Science Building

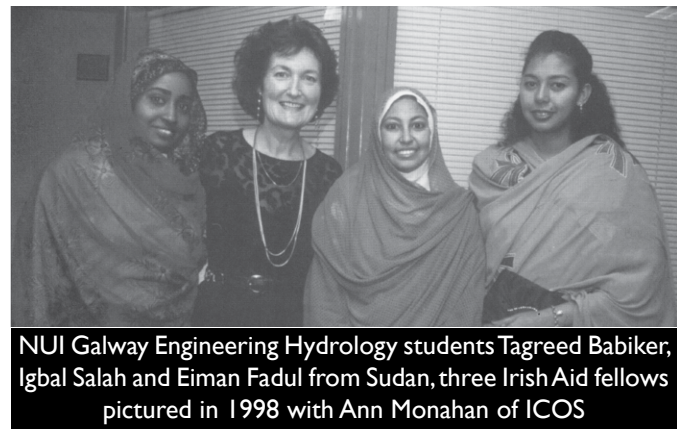
For all its expansion, the university remains close to the heart of the city, both physically and culturally, with NUI Galway's 17,000 registered students equating to almost one-in-five of the city's term-time population.

With Galway being located close to one of the country's several Irish-speaking regions, the university

supports a number of initiatives to promote the use of the Irish language and strives toward leading the way as a bilingual campus. International students at NUI Galway, who make up more than 12% of the total, are therefore much more likely to encounter spoken Irish than their Dublin counterparts. All are encouraged to pick up at least a *cúpla focal* (a couple of words).

In February 2012, NUI Galway was awarded a five star rating under the new QS Stars rating system.

Irish Aid Alumni and NUI Galway



NUI Galway Engineering Hydrology students Tagreed Babiker, Igbal Salah and Eiman Fadul from Sudan, three Irish Aid fellows pictured in 1998 with Ann Monahan of ICOS

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, up to 20 fellows a year were supported to study Engineering Hydrology at what was then known as University College Galway (the name change came in 1997). These awards covered a range of countries and the courses were specially funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs. Galway was such a significant component of the overall fellowship programme at this time that ICOS had a staff member based there - Ann Monahan.

The focus has changed over the past decade, with Irish Aid fellows at NUI Galway studying programmes in the fields of health promotion, public advocacy, law, gender and human rights. Four new awardees for 2012 will 'Go West', following a well trodden fellowship path.

NEXT ISSUE:

**DUBLIN CITY
UNIVERSITY**



Ireland celebrates Africa Day - in style

Towns and cities all around Ireland turned Africa Day into a lively week of events in May 2012, with free festivals, film screenings, concerts and children's events designed to celebrate the diversity and potential of the African continent.

Dublin's two-day flagship festival drew an estimated 10,000 people, while the cities of Galway, Limerick, Cork and the town of Tralee in the South West also joined the celebrations.

At the launch event, Tánaiste (Deputy Prime Minister) Eamon Gilmore, said: "Africa is a changing continent, with high economic growth rates and rapid development in terms of education and industry. Real challenges exist, but the African story right now is one of great energy and dynamism."



Minister for Trade and Development, Joe Costello TD, commented: "Africa Day showcases the range of relationships that exist between Ireland and Africa and the importance of our strong and effective partnerships. I'm particularly delighted that so many of our African diaspora groups have become involved... There is a strong dynamic and warmth to the Irish-African relationship that will only be enriched by the growing cultural, business, developmental and people-to-people links."

Lord Mayor of Dublin, Andrew Montague added: "I have volunteered with the Irish charity CAMARA in Uganda, Tanzania and Zambia. I've seen that life in Africa is changing for the better for many people and we have a lot to celebrate in this year's Africa Day."



Shaking It! - Thousands celebrated Africa Day at a weekend festival in Georges Dock, Dublin - Photos Conor Ó Mearáin



White paper review underway

The Irish Government has allocated €639 million for its aid programme in 2012. The Government policy in the area of poverty reduction is guided by a White Paper.

Published in September 2006, this document places the fight against world poverty at the heart of Ireland's foreign policy and sets out the guiding principles of the Irish Aid programme.

A review of the White Paper was announced in June 2011, following a commitment in the coalition agreement of the new government. The review is looking at the progress made by Irish Aid, and the changing national and international context. It will help to shape the policy direction for the coming years. Minister of State for Trade and Development, Mr. Joe Costello TD, is leading the review, with independent oversight from an expert advisory group.

To date, there has been a broad consultation with all key stakeholders, including the general public, civil society, partner countries, the private sector and the Oireachtas (parliament).

The review will be published later in the year.

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

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