

# » The Link

**Irish Aid Fellowship  
Alumni Newsletter**

**Issue 5 - Autumn 2013**

## **Irish Aid review endorses fellowships Programme extends to Sierra Leone and South Africa**

A review of the Irish Aid programme has given a strong endorsement to the value of study fellowships, recommending that this area be ‘substantially’ expanded in pursuit of Ireland’s overall development goals.

Two recent initiatives have already begun to steer a course in this direction.

Firstly, a new fellowship programme has been introduced for South Africa - The Kader Asmal Fellowship - with two awardees now in Ireland for the pilot year.

Secondly, an additional ‘technical’ strand has been added to the IDEAS Fellowship for Vietnam, which resulted in five awardees arriving for 2013-14.

With the number of successful candidates through the Fellowship Training Programme also increasing this year, Irish Aid scholarships for Masters’ level study in Ireland rose by more than a third overall - to 65 awardees.

Another notable development is the extension of the Fellowship Training Programme to Sierra Leone, which becomes one of Ireland’s ‘key partner countries’ following the review. Applications recently opened in the west African country and the first arrivals are expected in Ireland as part of the 2014-15 intake.

See p3 for more on the new policy document for Ireland’s international development programme, ‘One World, One Future’.

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**First steps toward alumni chapter in Lesotho**

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# Alumni and embassy help new fellows prepare

In July, a pre-departure event was organised in Hanoi, Vietnam, for 2013-14 Irish Aid scholarship awardees - with input from three recent fellowship graduates.



Before starting their studies in Ireland, 26 new fellows from Vietnam attended an embassy-organised orientation day in July - and got tips and advice from those who had gone before.

The purpose of the event was to give scholars the chance to learn about living in Ireland through participation in team-building activities and to benefit from the experience and knowledge of returned fellows from previous years. It also aimed to introduce this year's fellows to one another and to develop a support network for the coming year.

Irish Aid gave a presentation on its role and that of the embassy, the IDEAS scholarship and an introduction to the UCD Smurfit Business School,

including accommodation arrangements and pointers for further information.

A great deal of information pertinent to Ireland's economy was covered by an Education in Ireland presentation delivered by Enterprise Ireland, which also introduced their role in promoting Ireland internationally.

Three alumni (Ms Hoang Thuy Linh, Mr Nguyen Manh Hung and Mr Pham Tung Lam) joined the event and were able to provide insights and feedback on the information contained in the presentations, including on Ireland as a country, its people, culture and customs. They also attended an open Q&A session to discuss the experience of study and living in Ireland. This

session was regarded as the most useful and interesting session of the day. Fellows covered topics ranging from preparing for their courses to travel opportunities.

Garvan McCann, Head of Development at the Embassy of Ireland, joined the session at the closing to deliver a message of congratulations and support to the scholarship recipients and provide insights into student expectations from the perspective of the Embassy.

Feedback from the participants, who had all received one year Masters scholarships under the IDEAS and Fellowship Training Programmes, indicated that they valued the day workshop in terms of information sharing and team building.

# Ireland launches new development policy

**Michael McManus, Irish Aid**

On 2nd May 2013, Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Mr Eamon Gilmore T.D., together with Minister of State for Trade and Development, Mr Joe Costello T.D., launched **One World, One Future – Ireland’s Policy for International Development**.

The new policy replaces the 2006 White Paper on Irish Aid and was developed following a review of that Policy instigated by the current government. The Review involved extensive consultation with members of the public, with parliamentarians, NGOs, research bodies, the private sector and diaspora groups living in Ireland. Overall, we met with over 1,000 people and received over 165 written submissions.

In this new policy, we reiterate Ireland’s commitment to ending global poverty and hunger. We will do so through our overseas aid budget, our leadership on the international stage and through the skills and expertise available in Irish institutions and Irish society more broadly.

## A changing world

At the core of our new policy are some significant global changes.



L-R: Tánaiste Eamon Gilmore T.D., Nora Owen (Chairperson of the Irish Aid Expert Advisory Group) and Minister of State Joe Costello T.D. launch the new policy



## IRELAND'S DEVELOPMENT GOALS

**Goal 1:**  
Reduced hunger, stronger resilience

**Goal 2:**  
Inclusive and sustainable economic growth

**Goal 3:**  
Better governance, human rights and accountability

Firstly, while there has been very impressive progress in reducing poverty, it is clear that countries affected by conflict or other forms of fragility lag far behind, with millions of people still mired in extreme poverty.

Similarly, while the significant economic growth in middle income countries is welcome, we recognize that it has not reached all citizens equally, nor is it always based on sustainable growth patterns. In both cases, Irish Aid is responding.

We are gradually re-focusing our resources on countries emerging from the shadow of conflict and fragility, such as Sierra Leone. We are also changing our approach to countries reaching middle income status placing greater emphasis on wealth distribution and the role which Irish institutions can play in supporting them to build an economy which benefits all citizens.

## Graduating from a dependence on aid

A fairer and more equitable world will bring new markets for our goods and enhance the prospects for peace and stability. Working to eradicate poverty and hunger is therefore not just the right thing to do; it is also in our interest as a small, open, trading country in an ever more globalised world.

» [View the new policy at www.irishaid.ie](http://www.irishaid.ie)

# Staying connected: **Rashid Sesay**

**Rashid Sesay is one of a small number of candidates from Sierra Leone to receive an Irish Aid fellowship. » [The Link](#) asked him about his studies in 2001-2, his subsequent career and the news that Sierra Leone will now benefit from further Irish Aid support and fellowships.**



I was very pleased to be able to do the MA in Development at UCD - it was a dream to be able to focus my studies on development. One module that has stayed with me and that is particularly useful up to this moment was on 'Project Appraisal, Design, Implementation and Monitoring' - it's part of all I have been doing since that time.

After working at policy level in the Development Assistance co-ordination office, I became Country Co-ordinator for Heifer International in 2008. It was a new programme in Sierra Leone and an opportunity for me to look at something else, closer to the grassroots people in rural areas. When I started initially from college, as Project Officer with Association for Rural Development, I was working in the field and this switch took me back to the field - I like that part.

Heifer is a US-based international NGO whose work takes in 12 countries in Africa, and also includes the Asia/South Pacific region, Central and Eastern Europe and the Americas. Our mission is to end hunger, poverty and to care for the earth. We do that through livestock - heifer itself means female, two-year old cattle. We provide a lot of training to smallholder farmers who are engaged in livestock management and place animals in communities where they're not available. In Sierra Leone, the livestock sector was seriously

affected during the war so when we started there, one of our major tasks was to replenish the population by placing small ruminants in the communities. The most important principle is that when you receive an animal you have to pass on the offspring of to another member of your community - as well as the skills and knowledge you received from Heifer. Within one or two years a whole community can benefit. Our work goes toward improvement of incomes, nutrition, women's empowerment, the environment and building social capital.

Since September of last year I have been in the role of Regional Director. I'm covering Sierra Leone, Ghana, Senegal, Cameroon and have a new responsibility of opening up in the Sahel that may involve working also in Niger and Mali, depending on the security situation there. I work with the country directors to see how we could develop programmes and also with donors, identifying

funding opportunities, helping develop proposals that will address needs within the region. Every day my work has something to do with what I learnt in UCD.

From my time in Ireland, my strongest memories are the rain, the green scenery and the people themselves. I stayed with a host family in Templeogue so travelling to UCD Belfield was quite a distance and I had to change buses. I recall one particular moment when I was so exhausted coming back from campus that I slept in the bus - but the female driver knew my stop and called me when we got there 'Gentleman, this is your stop!' The Irish were very nice people, always willing to help. I'm really hoping to visit Ireland again some day; I'd like to reawaken the contacts - they're very precious for me.

When I heard that Sierra Leone had become an Irish Aid priority country, it was welcome news and something I had been looking forward to. All the indicators show the need for support to my country in coming back from war. It can make a big impact. Ireland's success has mostly been due to capacity development, a high literacy and skill level. Three or four other colleagues have come back from scholarships there and are doing well. Fellowships mean that we can make more contribution to development, not just of Sierra Leone but the region and maybe even globally.



**Church donors in Ohio, USA, hear directly from Rashid about Heifer International's work**

# Spotlight on: Education

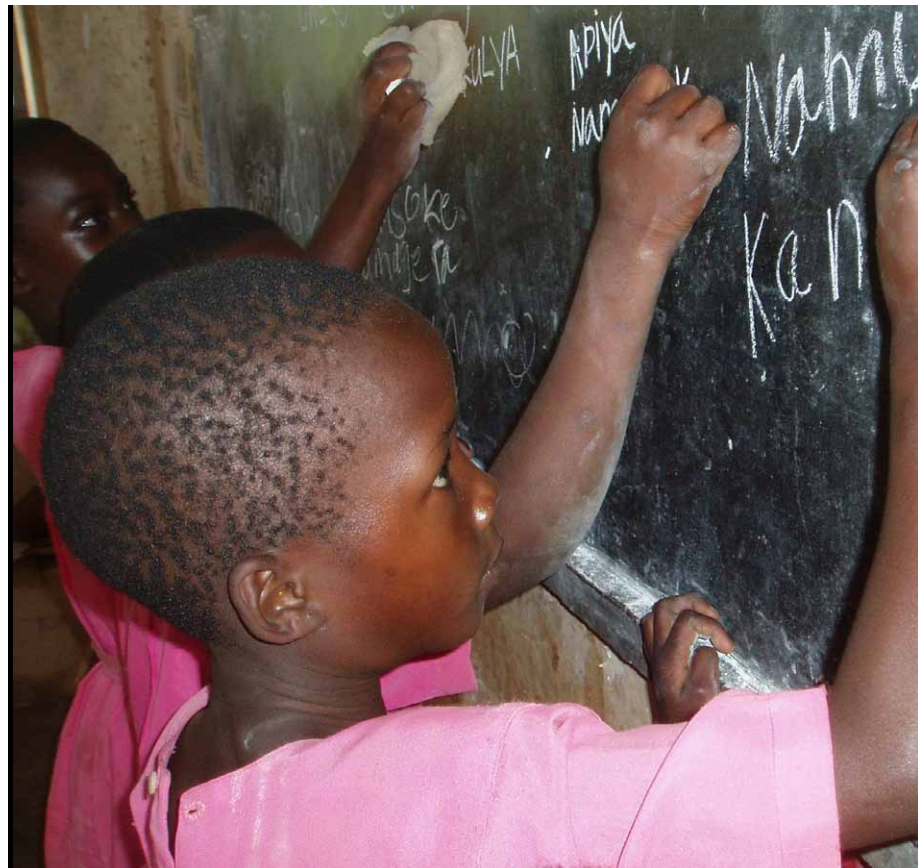
A feature series in »[The Link](#) taking each of Irish Aid’s thematic priorities in turn

Irish Aid recognises that education is a fundamental human right for all people and is the basic building block of every society.

Quality education contributes to human development. It provides people with the critical knowledge, abilities and skills that are needed to question, conceptualise and solve problems that occur both locally and globally, and actively contribute to the sustainable and democratic development of society. Hence, quality education is fundamental to the achievement of all other development goals, including gender equality, health, nutrition and environmental sustainability.

Education has always been a central focus of Irish Aid’s work and its new Policy on International Development: ‘One World, One Future’ reaffirms its importance. Irish Aid spends 8% of its bilateral Official Development Assistance (ODA) on education. In 2012, this amounted to €33.9 million.

Irish Aid works with national governments to build effective and accountable education systems and promotes a focus



Girls learning to write in a rural school in Uganda – Photo: A. Mulkeen

on improving quality, ensuring access for girls and reaching the most marginalised.

Support is also provided to civil society organizations for their valuable work in fostering community involvement in the running of schools and for providing education services in communities affected by conflict

or communities not covered by government services.

Ireland also supports the Global Partnership for Education, which provides education grants to poor countries and places a strong emphasis on improving learning quality and supporting education service delivery in fragile states.



Overcrowding is still an issue in many classrooms, as it is in this classroom in Uganda.  
Photo courtesy of A. Mulkeen

## Examples of Irish Aid support to education

Ireland supports civil society organizations in **Zambia** to raise awareness on the negative impact that teen pregnancy and early marriage have on girls’ education.

In **Uganda** Irish Aid support helped train teachers on the use of the government’s new

curriculum, which focuses strongly on improving literacy and numeracy.

Similarly, in Niassa, a North Western province of **Mozambique**, Irish Aid funds were used to train teachers in new methods of improving literacy.

## Lesotho: Former fellows gather to start alumni chapter

The Embassy of Ireland in Maseru invited former students sponsored by Irish Aid to a meeting held on Friday 14 June 2013 with a view to forming an alumni chapter.

Out of twelve invited fellows, ten were able to attend and Ambassador Gerry Gervin - pictured right with attendees - outlined the objective of the meeting and facilitated the discussions. The group nominated a convenor who will organise future meetings and the embassy will support them by continuing to provide hosting and conference facilities.



## Irish Aid fellows conferred in Hanoi, Vietnam

Former fellows are usually long back at their workplaces when graduation ceremonies come around, sometimes a year after their courses conclude. As a result, few get to wear the cap and gown. However, for a group of IDEAS fellows from Vietnam,

the UCD ceremony came to them - in Hanoi.

In December 2012, a delegation from Ireland visited the Vietnamese capital on an education services mission, led by Minister of State for Training

and Skills, Ciarán Cannon T.D. As part of the programme, the Embassy hosted conferring at which successful fellows from 2011-12 were presented with their Masters' awards. It was the first time that this prestigious event had been held in Vietnam.



2011-12 IDEAS graduates are joined by (back row, left to right) Mr Michael Garvey, Director ASEAN Region, Enterprise Ireland; Mr Damien Cole, Ambassador of Ireland to Vietnam; Mr Ciarán Cannon T.D., Minister of State for Training and Skills; and Professor Aidan Kelly, Director of International Relations, UCD Michael Smurfit Graduate Business School.

# College Spotlight: University College Cork



# UCC

Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh, Éire  
University College Cork, Ireland

» **The Link** heads to Ireland's most southerly university in this issue



The Long Hall and the Clock Tower of the UCC quadrangle - Photo: Bjørn Christian Tørrissen

The forerunner of today's UCC was founded in 1845 as Queens College Cork. At its heart, then as now, is the quadrangle - invariably known as 'The Quad' - where grand stone buildings extend around three sides of a pristine lawn to create an iconic image.

In 1908, a renamed University College Cork became a founding member of the National University of Ireland. Amongst many changes, this meant that UCC could, for the first time, stage its own graduation ceremonies, rather than these being held in Dublin (no small matter for the fiercely independent people of Cork).

Student numbers have increased significantly since the late 1980s and the university has acquired several adjacent buildings and lands to extend the

campus over recent years. UCC is today home to around 18,000 students, with approximately 2,400 - 13% of the student population - coming to study from outside Ireland.

In its strategic planning, UCC has put great emphasis on building on its research strengths and its four Research Institutes. It has also established a Centre for Global Development and a corresponding commitment to adopt a global perspective in all of its activities. Recent initiatives include the development of a joint MSc in Rural Development with two Ethiopian universities and a research partnership with Malawi seeking to combat maternal and child mortality through the use of novel IT strategies.

## Irish Aid Fellowships and UCC

Fellowship students at UCC have undertaken a wide array of programmes - from Fisheries Management through to Public Health, and Sustainable Energy to Social Policy.

Over the years, courses exploring the organisation and development of co-operatives have been the most common area of study, with UCC's Centre for Co-operative Studies giving the university a unique national specialism in this field.



Recent additions: UCC Student Centre with the O'Rahilly Arts and Commerce Building opposite

**NEXT ISSUE:**

**DUBLIN INSTITUTE  
OF TECHNOLOGY**



# Dublin hosts major conference on hunger, nutrition and climate justice



On 15-16 April this year, the Government of Ireland, as part of Ireland's EU Presidency, and the Mary Robinson Foundation-Climate Justice co-hosted a major international conference in Dublin Castle on the inter-linkages between hunger, nutrition and climate justice.

The conference, a highlight of Ireland's Presidency of the European Union (EU), was organised closely with the support of the UN World Food Programme and CGIAR's Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security Programme. It took a new approach in examining the intersection between food and nutrition security and climate change.

Over 100 representatives of grassroots organisations and local communities were sponsored to participate and engage in a dialogue with key international policy makers and thought leaders on hunger, nutrition and climate change.

The conference commenced with a powerful opening address by Ireland's President, Michael D. Higgins, and closed with a poignant and powerful keynote speech by former U.S. Vice-President, Al Gore.

One of the most memorable sentiments expressed throughout the conference was summed up by Ms Esther Jabesi from Malawi. She said, to the policy makers



## Key Messages

**One billion people still live in extreme poverty and 870 million people are undernourished. Climate change is a multiplier of hunger and undernutrition, intensifying the effects on the poorest and most vulnerable communities across the globe.**

In moving towards a solutions, the conference dialogue highlighted some key messages:

- local people must have a real say in the policy debate on the post-2015 process.
- we need to invest more effectively in knowledge, education and science.
- we need to take action to empower poor households, and especially women to engage in decision making.
- we need to recognise that, while the poor in developing countries have had no option but to adapt to climate change in order to survive, we in the developed world have not yet identified a similarly compelling reason to change our consumption and production patterns.

in the room, "you have to listen to me because I have experience – what I know isn't written in your papers!"

**Multimedia and documentation are available on the conference website:**

[www.eu2013.ie/events/event-items/hncj](http://www.eu2013.ie/events/event-items/hncj)

[» View Conference Report](#)

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**Irish Council for International Students, 41 Morehampton Road, Dublin 4, Ireland  
Phone: 353 | 6605233 - Fax 353 | 6682320 - Email: [office@icosirl.ie](mailto:office@icosirl.ie) - Web: [www.icosirl.ie](http://www.icosirl.ie)**