



2017/18 FELLOWS WELCOMED AT ORIENTATION EVENT IN DUBLIN CASTLE

On September 16, the Irish Aid fellows were welcomed to the Fellowship Orientation Day 2017 in Dublin Castle. Irish Aid's Africa Director, Fionnuala Gilsean, formally opened proceedings welcoming all of the newly-arrived fellows to Ireland and congratulating them on their achievement of receiving a fellowship award.

Ms Gilsean was followed by Dr Deirdre O'Connor of University College Dublin, who introduced fellows to what they can expect in terms of the academic culture in Ireland. Dr O'Connor has supported the fellowship programme for many years and, as usual, her presentation was well-received and fellows found her advice very useful.

A session on culture followed this and was facilitated by ICOS' Emma Dwyer, who explained some aspects of Irish culture and engaged with fellows on topics such as culture shock and intercultural communications.

The final speakers of the day were three of the 2016 fellows who are finishing their studies in the coming weeks: Duth Kimsru (Cambodia), Edward Mboyonga (Zambia),

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Irish Aid's Africa Director, Fionnuala Gilsean, addresses fellows at the Orientation event



2017/18 Irish Aid Fellows from Africa at Orientation event in Dublin Castle

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ICOS VISITS FELLOWS AT THEIR COLLEGES





ICOS Director, Sheila Power, addresses fellows at Orientation event in Dublin Castle



2016 fellows in attendance: Duth Kimsru, Edward Mboyonga, Lorna Born, Thabo Sibiya and James Banda

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and Lorna Born (South Africa). The incoming fellows particularly appreciated their contributions, and were able to glean even more information from them in the workshops that followed, for which two more 2016 fellows also joined in: Thabo Sibiya and James Banda.

The day concluded with a welcome reception before everyone returned to their respective universities throughout Ireland.

Thanks to everyone who helped to make the day a success and we wish all of the 2017 Irish Aid fellows great success in their studies in the year ahead!



2017/18 Irish Aid Fellows from Vietnam at Orientation event in Dublin Castle





Staying Connected: Dr. Zubair Kabir

>>[The Link](#) had the opportunity to meet with Dr. Kabir in Cork where he is now working in University College Cork (UCC) in the School of Public Health. Dr. Kabir first came to Ireland in 1999 as an awardee from India to study on the MSc in Community Health in Trinity College Dublin (TCD).

“I feel that I am an Ambassador for Ireland” says Dr. Zubair Kabir “and this connection goes so much further than just my experience as a student in Dublin”. Speaking from his office in the School of Public Health in UCC, Dr. Kabir shared his experiences of being an Irish Aid Fellowship awardee. It is a testament to the high standard set by Fellowship awardees that the Course Director for the Masters in Public Health (MPH) in UCC, which currently has two Irish Aid fellows from Uganda and Zimbabwe on the programme, is a former Irish Aid fellowship awardee himself.

Dr. Kabir was working in community medicine in India when he applied for the Irish Aid Fellowship Training Programme (FTP) and he was awarded the opportunity to study on the MSc in Community Health in TCD. “I saw the ad in a government newsletter but never thought I would be successful. I left India for the first time when I travelled to Ireland in 1999 to study and the first thing that struck me was the cold! The ICOS welcome orientation was held in UCD and I remember that it was an early start in the morning,

it was cold and I needed so many layers of clothing!”

Adjusting to life in a new country is often a challenge which all international students face, but Dr. Kabir described how the extra support provided through the Fellowship Programme, and particularly by Deirdre Murray and John O’Connell who worked in ICOS at that time, meant that he and the other Irish Aid fellows were made to feel very welcome and at home during their studies in Ireland. With much smaller numbers of students on the Fellowship Programme at that time, ICOS used to also organise cultural tours and Dr. Kabir fondly remembered the bus trip to the Japanese Gardens in Kildare.

As an MSc student in TCD, Dr. Kabir and his mentor, the late Professor John Kevany, understood the maternal and child health implications of childhood immunization in low and middle income countries, including India. Dr Kabir got his MSc thesis published in several journals, including the Bulletin of the World Health Organization for which he was invited as a Technical Advisor to WHO (Geneva) on the Measles Vaccine Steering

Committee Meeting in 2004.

Dr Kabir was given a rare opportunity to pursue higher studies in Epidemiology & Public Health in TCD where he continued his PhD studies, focusing on expanding the research being undertaken into the links between tobacco use and lung cancer. He worked with Professor Luke Clancy in the Tobacco Free Research Institute in Ireland, which is an independent research centre focused on the population health effects of tobacco use and public health policies around tobacco control. This research was of particular importance due to the policy implications it would go on to have in supporting the introduction in March 2004 of legislation in Ireland banning smoking in workplaces. Ireland became the first country in the world to introduce such legislation. One of Dr. Kabir’s studies published in the European Respiratory Journal in 2009 was also instrumental in implementing banning smoking in private vehicles in Ireland, which became a law in 2016.

“The skills that I developed during my studies in TCD were thanks to the opportunity provided to me by the Irish

Aid Fellowship,” explained Dr. Kabir. These skills were developed even further in 2006-2008 during his Post-Doc in the Harvard School of Public Health in the prestigious Harvard University in Boston, USA, with Professor Gregory Connolly and Professor Howard Koh (the former Assistant Health Secretary under the Obama Administration). Dr. Kabir would eventually return to TCD briefly in 2011 where he worked as a Senior Researcher in the Department of Pharmacology and Therapeutics before he joined the team in the UCC School of Public Health in 2012.

As a Course Director and Senior Lecturer in the School of Public Health, Dr. Kabir is actively involved in contributing to national, European and international research collaborations, but reflected also on his early research - “I wrote 5 papers out of my master’s thesis in TCD and I acknowledged Irish Aid in all of them”. To date, Dr Kabir has published more

than 100 research papers, and has supervised many MPH students (mainly international students) within the School. Dr. Kabir is also a member of the UCC South-East Asia Working Group strengthening ‘internationalization’ within UCC and promoting Ireland as a place for study. Dr Kabir, as a member of this Working Group, has recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with two top Higher Education Institutions in India- the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (Mumbai) and Manipal University. As if to complete the circle from his own experience as an international student, he now returns regularly to India to promote education in Ireland to prospective students.

Public health is one of the 10 priority areas for the work of Irish Aid and it represents an important priority also for the Fellowship Programme. There are a number of Public Health programmes on offer in Irish Higher Education Institutions under the Fellowship Programme

and the MPH in UCC includes specific pathways for study in Health Promotion and Health Protection. Study in these areas is crucial for international efforts towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which were agreed in 2015, facilitated by Ireland and Kenya in the UN in New York. SDG 3 specifically aims to “ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages,” but health is also closely linked to the achievement of many other SDGs related to poverty, hunger, inequality and economic growth. Dr Kabir is the only collaborator from Ireland to contribute to the Global Burden of Disease (GBD) Study published in the Lancet recently across 195 nations which are crucial for informing national public health policy-making. The work of Dr. Kabir and all Fellowship awardees who study in the field of Public Health is contributing to these efforts both locally and globally.

Dr. Kabir was interviewed in person in Cork in November 2017



1999 Irish Aid Fellowship recipients, including Dr. Zubair Kabir (centre)

TEACHERS MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN UGANDA



State Minister for Higher Education, John C. Muyingo, Irish Ambassador to Uganda, Finbar O'Brien, and sponsor representatives with "Teachers Making a Difference" award winners

This year the Irish Embassy in Uganda began sponsoring the Teachers Making a Difference programme. The award programme, which recognises excellence in teaching, has been run by the New Vision Publishing Company since 2008. In January, the five teachers from Uganda who were highest placed in the awards, will visit Ireland to attend the WorldWise Global Schools Post Primary Teachers' conference in Dublin and meet with Irish teachers. The visit is organised by Trócaire, who along with Simba Travel Care, are another partner in the award programme.

Teachers Making a Difference recognises the most creative and innovative teachers working in difficult environments. They mobilise their communities to send and keep their children in school, are creative in using limited resources to deliver quality education, innovative in integrating low cost ICT in schools, and promote vocational and life skills education. These are all priorities of the wider Irish Aid education programme.

From over 600 teachers nominated by their communities, twelve winners were recognised as the most innovative and inspiring teachers and, out of these, the top five were selected to travel to Ireland. On the 5th of October an awards ceremony was held in Kampala where the winners were announced by John C. Muyingo, the State Minister for Higher Education. The Irish Ambassador, Finbar

O'Brien, also attended with representatives of the other programme sponsors.

As part of the programme, New Vision profiled one of the shortlisted teachers, Sajidi Tabuga. He is a volunteer teacher working in the Bidi Bidi refugee camp in Yumbe district in northern Uganda, in the Early Child Development Centre for refugees from South Sudan. It is very difficult to find teachers to work in what is one of the largest refugee camps in the world. Sajidi is dedicated to working in these difficult conditions. Sajidi recycles boxes, bottles and anything else he finds in the camps to make teaching aids, and he organises football games after class using a football made from plastic bags. He also ensures attendance by making home visits when a child has missed school.

The award scheme is in line with the Irish Embassy's wider education programme goals. These aim to provide better access to, and completion of, quality education and training in marginalised areas. The programme covers primary, secondary and vocational education. The Embassy contributes to improving the education sector in Uganda by working with NGOs, UN organisations and partner country development cooperation programmes. For example, it supports the NGO Straight Talk Foundation to implement a bursary programme, which so far has enabled 1,950 students to access secondary and tertiary education.

CHRISTMAS PARTY 2017



On the evening of December 13, this year's fellows took a break from their studies to join ICOS staff and friends of ICOS at the Hampton Hotel in Dublin to celebrate Christmas.

It was a lovely evening, with drinks, food, mince pies and Christmas crackers!

Entertainment was provided by "Chaos in Harmony," a choir group who delighted everyone with Christmas songs such as Silent Night, White Christmas and Santa Claus is Coming to Town.

A big thank you to all the staff at the Hampton Hotel, and to Deirdre Healy from KDSC for helping to arrange the choir.

ICOS and Irish Aid would like to wish all fellows past and present, and their families, a very Happy Christmas!



IRISH ALUMNI SOUTH AFRICA LAUNCHED



Irish Aid Kader Asmal Fellowship alumni, embassy staff, representatives of Canon Collins and the South Africa Washington International Programme, and Irish Ambassador to South Africa, Liam MacGabhann (centre), at the launch

By Thuso Mokwa

Kader Asmal fellows, representing all four cohorts, gathered on November 11th 2017 to establish the Irish Alumni South Africa. The fellows were joined by representatives of Canon Collins, the South Africa Washington International Programme, and the Embassy of Ireland, including Ambassador Liam MacGabhann.

The envisioned aim of the alumni association is to encompass all South Africans who have studied in Ireland with the aim to develop strategic, purposeful networks, and to strengthen ties between Ireland and South Africa.

The executive committee of the soon to be formalised alumni chapter were also elected:

Chairperson: Rhulani Lehloka
Vice-Chair: Sylvia Gertze
Treasurer: Thuso Mokwa
Secretary: Justine van Rooyen

35 Kader Asmal fellows have studied in Ireland since 2013, and 13 of these were present on this momentous occasion. For most of those present, it was the first opportunity to meet fellows from other years.

Laughter, experiences and tales of Irish adventures were shared, and everyone had

the opportunity to share their experiences since their return to South Africa.

The gathering was a great opportunity not only to discuss strategic plans for the alumni association, but also to build camaraderie and foster relationships. Expect great things to come from the Irish Alumni South Africa.

If you are interested in getting involved, contact alumni@icosirl.ie.



Executive Committee (from left): Sylvia Gertze, Justine van Rooyen, Thuso Mokwa, and Rhulani Lehloka



2016 fellow Naomi Molefe meets with Minister of State for the Diaspora and International Development, Ciaran Cannon T.D. and Irish Ambassador, Liam MacGabhann, at an event during the Minister's recent visit to South Africa

NEW ALUMNI CHAPTER FOR BURUNDI

On December 13th 2016, the Second Secretary at the Irish Embassy in Tanzania, Robert Hull, met with four Fellowship alumni in Burundi, all of whom studied in Ireland under the Courtney Fellowship.

Among the topics of discussion was the establishment of an Irish Aid Fellowship alumni association in Burundi. Anyone who wishes to become involved should contact alumni@icosirl.ie.



From left: Thierry Kajeneza (2015/16 fellow), Jean Bosco Ndizeye (2013/14 fellow), Jean Baptiste Niyongabo (2016/17 fellow), Robert Hull (Second Secretary, Irish Embassy), Jean Bosco Harerimana (2014/15 fellow)

RECENT GRADUATIONS

Here is a selection of photographs sent to us by fellowship alumni who recently graduated from their programmes and who were able to attend their graduation ceremonies. Congratulations to all recent graduates!



Doreen Elias Mangesho (Tanzania),
University of Dar Es Salaam



Njabulo Mazibuko (South Africa),
Trinity College Dublin



Maha Abdallah (Palestine),
National University of Ireland, Galway



Edita Rutatora (Tanzania),
Sokoine University of Agriculture



Patricia Erasmus (South Africa), Trinity College Dublin



Innocent Aleluya Abaho (Uganda),
International Health Sciences University

Do you have something
you would like to share
in the next issue of
>>The Link? Get in
touch at:

alumni@icosirl.ie



ICOS staff at the Christmas party in the Hampton Hotel, Dublin

Happy Christmas from Irish Aid & ICOS

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