

Welcoming the new Liberian fellows



The first ever Irish Aid Fellows from Liberia attending the 2016 Fellowship Orientation at Farmleigh House. From left: Walker Mahn, Catherine Thomas and Abdul Koroma

Irish Aid would like to extend a warm welcome to Ireland to students from Liberia, the newest fellowship award country.

Liberia became eligible under the Irish Aid Fellowship Training Programme for 2016-17 and three fellows commenced Master's programmes in Ireland in September.

Walker Mahn is a researcher with the Liberian Drug Enforcement Agency and he has come to Ireland to study Applied Social Research at Trinity College Dublin.

Catherine Thomas is a healthcare worker and is studying Global Health at Trinity College.

Abdul Koroma is an official at the Ministry of Public Works in Liberia. He is doing a master's in Environment, Society and Development in NUI Galway.

You can learn more about the first ever Irish Aid fellows from Liberia on page 11.

In total, Irish Aid welcomed to Ireland 74 new fellows from 12 different countries for the 2016-17 programme. A further 26 fellows were approved for in-region study in 2016, while another 81 fellows are continuing in-region studies begun in previous years.

Irish Aid would like to wish all 2016 awardees the best of luck in their studies!

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Meet the new team at ICOS



From left: Shannette Budhai, Emma Dwyer and Derrie Murray

In 2016, Louise Staunton and Colin Tannam left ICOS to take up positions in the international offices of two Irish universities and Dave Moore decided to return to education to pursue postgraduate studies. They had each been with ICOS for a number of years and will be greatly missed. We wish them all the best in the future.

A whole new Fellowship team has now started at ICOS, and they have been working hard to help all of the 2016 fellows to settle in. Find out more about the new team below.

Shannette Budhai

Shannette joins the ICOS team as the new Programme and Communications Officer. She most recently worked with Comhlámh overseeing the development of the Code of Good Practice auditing tool for volunteer sending agencies working in international development. She has a keen interest in immigration matters and will step into Colin's role as ICOS' immigration liaison officer.

Emma Dwyer

Emma has joined ICOS as the Programme and Training Manager and is responsible for the operational management of the Fellowship Programme. With a background in international development, Emma has worked with the UN in Malawi and the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs in New York and most recently was the Executive Director of an Irish non-profit organisation called Irish Rule of Law International.

Derrie Murray

Derrie comes to ICOS from a youth charity called Future Voices. Before that he worked and studied at Trinity College Dublin in the political science department, and he also has experience working as an English teacher. In addition to looking after the current fellows, Derrie will also be responsible for staying in touch with Fellowship alumni, so if you want to get in touch you can email him today at alumni@icosirl.ie. He would love to hear from you!

Fellowship Orientation held at Farmleigh House in Dublin

On September 24th, 2016, ICOS and Irish Aid hosted incoming fellows for orientation at Farmleigh House.

An estate of 78 acres based in Dublin's Phoenix Park, Farmleigh House dates back to the late 18th Century, and was bought by the Irish Government from the Guinness Family in 1999.

Today, this is where the Taoiseach, or Prime Minister, greets heads of state when they come to Ireland on official visits.

Fellows were greeted by ICOS Director, Sheila Power and Irish Aid's Head of Bilateral Cooperation Unit Southern Africa, Asia and Palestine, Fionnuala Gilsean, both of whom emphasised that beginning an Irish Aid fellowship marks the start of a lifelong relationship with Ireland.

UCD's Dr Deirdre O'Connor then introduced fellows to everything they need to know about studying in Ireland.

This was followed by three outgoing fellows – Faridah Kyomuhangi, Can Thi Thanh Huyen and Thomas Thuso Mokwa – sharing their experiences and facilitating workshops that gave incoming fellows many useful tips.

The day concluded with a welcome reception in Farmleigh House's Conservatory among the many exotic plants and flowers grown there, before everyone returned to their universities throughout Ireland.

We wish all of the 2016 Irish Aid fellows great success in their studies in the year ahead!



Farmleigh House, Phoenix Park



Kader Asmal fellows 2016-17



IDEAS fellows 2016-17



Incoming 2016-17 FTP fellows attending Orientation at Farmleigh House in the Phoenix Park in Dublin

Staying Connected: Khaled Quzmar

>>The Link spoke to Khaled, an Irish Aid Fellowship alumnus from Palestine, 10 years after he came to Ireland to study International Human Rights Law at NUI Galway.



When Khaled Quzmar was 14 years old, his brother was arrested by Israeli occupation forces and Khaled was only able to see him through an “iron net” when he visited. His desire to break through this iron net and give his brother a hug – a simple request denied by the Israeli prison authorities – is what inspired Khaled to become a lawyer: “I found that the only way was to become a lawyer and visit him in prison and hug him inside.”

He studied for his law degree at Oran University in Algeria, and returned to Palestine 5 years later to find his brother still in prison. Two days later, he was inside his brother’s cell and was finally able to hug him.

For the next 20 years, Khaled continued to work as a defence lawyer representing mainly child prisoners inside the Israeli military courts.

However, after 20 years, Khaled became so frustrated that he felt that he could no longer continue to battle in the Israeli military courts system.

“I got aggressive with my children. I couldn’t accept it when I came home after working 10 hours in the military courts, leaving children alone behind bars without anybody to take care of them, subjected sometimes to torture and ill-treatment, while my children asked me to go to a restaurant or to the cinema. So I became aggressive. But then I thought to myself, ‘Why am I doing that? Why am I blaming my children? Why am I punishing them?’ So I decided to

stop working, to have a rest, and to study something.”

This was in 2006, and soon Khaled came across the Irish Centre for Human Rights in NUI Galway, and learned of Irish Aid’s Fellowship Training Programme. He applied, his application was successful, and “within a few weeks, everything was organised and I had to leave for Ireland.” However, while he was excited, it was not easy for Khaled to leave his family behind.

“For me, it was a difficult experience because I had children – they were the age of teenagers – and it was not easy to leave them. It was a challenge for me, but my wife supported me and advised me to go.”

And so he did. But it was not easy in the beginning for Khaled: “At the time, my English was very bad, unfortunately, and when I arrived, just two days later the semester started and the first lecture – it was about three hours – I understood no more than 10% of what the lecturer was saying and this killed me.”

But Khaled did not give up: “I kept studying and struggling.” He started a gruelling study schedule, working 18 hours a day locked away in his room, determined not only to keep up with the course materials, but also to improve his English.

“I used to sleep about half an hour, one hour, and then back to study, and to study in order to improve my English because on each page I used to find at least 100 words that I did not know. It was a challenge.”

Khaled’s hard work and

determination payed off. When his first assignment came around he was expecting to get around 45%. However, when the marks were announced two weeks later, Khaled was shocked when his professor, who he is still in touch with, informed him that he had achieved an A. This set a high bar which Khaled was determined he would maintain throughout his year of studies.

When asked where he got this determination from, he laughs: “At the time, my director agreed to give me one year off. But after being in Ireland for two weeks, I heard that he thought I would fail because of my English, and that I would be back after one or two months. So I thought, how can I convince him that I can do it?”

Really, though, it was the support from his family that helped him to stay focused, and Khaled spoke with them every day via Skype for only a few minutes before he would say, “Please, stop here because I have to go back to study.”

Despite his gruelling schedule, Khaled managed to find time to get out of his room and travel around Ireland too. He spoke at universities around the country about his work in Palestine, and he also took part in the Famine Walk, which commemorates the mid-19th century Great Famine that took place in Ireland.

“I participated in the Famine Walk, and afterwards I made a speech about Palestine, and during the Walk I was sharing my experience with different participants from all over the world. As a Palestinian, it

is a good experience to hear about Ireland's history and experience. We have been under the Israeli occupation for about 60 years, but Ireland stayed about 700 years under the British occupation."

Khaled also found some time to relax on his travels, recalling the three days he spent on the Aran Islands after submitting his last assignment as "three days I will never forget."

When Khaled returned to Palestine after his studies, he came back "with a new vision, a new mission about human rights issues, about international law, humanitarian law, human rights law." He had a new understanding of the Israeli military court system; that it was a political court "so far from the fair trial standards... It is designed to punish, not to obtain justice; it is to legitimate the Israeli violations and crimes against the Palestinians."

Now, 10 years after his studies in Ireland, Khaled is the director of Defence for Children International (DCI), Palestine – a position he obtained in 2014, and which he believes he would not have achieved if not for everything he learned during his time at the Irish Centre for Human Rights in NUI Galway.

Khaled is also working to pass on what he learned to the

next generation, establishing the Palestinian Child Rights Council, which works with around 5000 Palestinian children to teach them their rights, and also to teach acceptance of others in an attempt to divert them away from the ideologies of groups like Islamic State operating in the Middle East.

He explains that his work with DCI Palestine involves two main programmes. "The first is on the Israeli side, defending the children in the Israeli prisons, monitoring the situation and conditions where they are living inside the prisons.

"Second, we monitor the violations against children and use this in our advocacy at the international level."

There are many challenges in Khaled's work: "First of all, the continued occupation is a big challenge for us because when we started, this field used to represent 200 children in the Israeli prisons – unfortunately the number is increasing instead of decreasing. Violations are continuous and increasing and escalating. Our work is continuous. Sometimes you think these cases are without end." Khaled recalls that the latest available statistics recorded around 440 children in Israeli military prisons, but insists that at least 1000 Palestinian children go through Israeli prisons each year.

"The other challenge is that all of the Palestinian children in prison are inside prisons inside Israel... So I myself am deprived from having permission to visit them in the prison, and it's the same for other Palestinian lawyers, so we have to hire Israeli lawyers in order to continue the work."

Khaled repeats again and again over the course of our interview how grateful he is for the opportunity provided to him by Irish Aid, and how his time studying in Ireland has helped him with his work in Palestine.

He recently met with Ireland's Representative in Ramallah, along with other Irish Aid Fellowship alumni, where he expressed his wish to maintain links with Ireland. He also hopes to send his son to Ireland under the Fellowship Training Programme, because Khaled would like him to benefit in the same way he has.

"I believe education in Ireland is well known, and I myself consider it among the best in the world, so to have a degree from Ireland... it is not easy to have it. Many thanks to Ireland."

Khaled was interviewed via Skype in November, 2016

Khaled (second from left) and other Irish Aid Fellowship alumni meeting with Irish Representative Jonathan Conlon (third from left) at the Representative Office of Ireland in Ramallah in October 2016.



Irish Aid to launch new Development Education Strategy



Irish Aid
Government of Ireland
Rialtas na hÉireann



Members of the Global Education Network Europe (GENE) Peer Review Team: Mr. Eddie O' Loughlin, Ms. Alexandra Allen, Dr. Helmuth Hartmeyer, Ms. Liisa Jääskeläinen, and Mr. Dirk Bockens

The Irish Aid Development Education Strategy 2017-2023 will be launched by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Charles Flanagan, TD, and Minister of State for the Diaspora and International Development, Joe Mc Hugh, TD, on 21st December in Iveagh House, Dublin. The goal of development education is that people in Ireland are empowered to analyse and challenge the root causes and consequences of global hunger, poverty, inequality, injustice and climate change, inspiring and enabling them to become active global citizens in the creation of a fairer and more sustainable future for all. Increasing awareness in Ireland of the rapidly changing, interdependent and unequal world in which we live is a key component in Irish Aid's goal to tackle global poverty and injustice, to promote peace and democracy and to safeguard human rights.

At the core of Ireland's foreign policy, The Global Island (2015), is the protection of our citizens and the promotion of our values abroad. The four core values underpinning our foreign policy are a fairer, more just, more secure and more sustainable world. Irish Aid promotes these values abroad through our international development programme and at home through our development education programme. In an increasingly globalised world facing profound and prolonged conflicts

which are generating surges in migration, sustained poverty and environmental degradation, the need for education that promotes informed, coherent and sustained responses to these challenges has never been more apparent. Development education promotes citizenship literacy by deepening understanding of global justice issues and Ireland's core values, advancing our foreign policy aim of contributing to the collective international effort to build a better world for all.

A major stage in the development of our strategy was the GENE Peer Review and GENE National Report on Global Education in Ireland (2015). The Global Education Network Europe, or GENE, is the European network of ministries, agencies and other bodies with responsibility at national level for support, funding and policy-making in the field of Global Education or Development Education. In 2015, Irish Aid invited GENE to conduct a Peer Review to assess the national

context for development education in Ireland and make recommendations for the successor Development Education Strategy. The Peer Review team included experts from Austria, Finland, Luxembourg and Belgium. The findings of the review were published in the 'GENE National Report on Global Education in Ireland' which was launched in Iveagh House in November 2015.

[The GENE National Report](#) acknowledged the rich history and tradition of development education in Ireland and the long-standing commitment of Irish Aid, civil society organisations and other stakeholders working in this area. The report commended the diversity of strategy and approach in development education across the formal, non-formal and informal education sectors and recommended that the successor Development Education Strategy provide renewed vision and strengthen the aims of integrating development education in education at all levels.

To inform the development of the new Development Education Strategy, Irish Aid hosted a Development Education National Consultation Day in April 2015, attended by over 100 representatives from the formal education, youth, adult and community, civil society and development sectors. The National Consultation Day facilitated roundtable discussions which gave stakeholders the opportunity to discuss, debate and identify the challenges, opportunities and key priorities for the

progression of development education in Ireland.

Irish Aid worked closely with IDEA, the Irish Development Education Association, during the process of developing the new strategy. IDEA coordinated the establishment of three Task Groups, representing the formal education, adult and community education and youth sectors. Irish Aid held a number of meetings with the Task Groups to prepare for the GENE Peer Review, to discuss the GENE National Report and to share drafts of our strategy. These Task Groups presented at the Irish Aid Development Education National Consultation Day, met with the GENE Peer Review team and contributed written submissions to both the GENE Peer Review and the Irish Aid Development Education Strategy.

The new Development Education Strategy seeks to contribute to the realisation of Irish Aid's vision for a sustainable and just world, by providing an opportunity for people in Ireland to reflect on their roles and responsibilities as global citizens and by encouraging people to take action for a fairer and more sustainable future for all. We are confident that our ambitious strategy will increase the accessibility, quality and effectiveness of Development Education for people throughout Ireland. Our work takes inspiration from the words of Nelson Mandela: "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world".

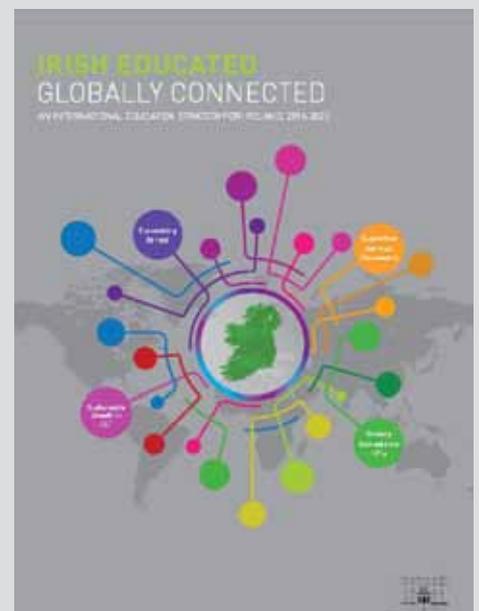
New Irish International Education Strategy Launched

On October 7th, 2016, Minister for Education, Richard Bruton, launched Ireland's new International Education Strategy 2016-2020.

ICOS contributed to the strategy in the consultation phase, and to a greater extent through its involvement in the High-Level Group on International Education, which will also monitor the strategy's implementation.

The strategy aims to increase the number of international students studying in Irish higher education institutions (HEIs) by 33% over the next 4 years to 44,000.

A central priority of the new strategy is to foster greater transnational education and increased internationalisation of curricula, whilst emphasising quality as central to academic offerings. It is hoped that this will make Irish HEIs more competitive in the global higher education market. Find out more [here](#).



Protecting the world's endangered mountain gorillas

Jean Pierre Mirindi Jobogo

>>The Link spoke to Jean Pierre about his work in the more than 10 years since he was awarded a fellowship to study for an MSc in World Heritage Management at UCD in 2005. Today he is Chief Park Warden in charge of the central sector of Virunga National Park.

Before I came to UCD I was a Senior Warden at Virunga National Park in the Democratic Republic of Congo. When I completed my studies at UCD, I got promoted to Chief Park Warden in charge of the central sector of Virunga National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, on the border of Uganda and Rwanda. Virunga is Africa's oldest national park and is also the continent's most biologically diverse protected area. Virunga is home to a quarter of the world's critically endangered mountain gorillas and these gorillas were my main research topic at UCD.

I chose the World Heritage Management course at UCD as it was the only one of its kind and covered both biology and environmental studies. The course trains people working in protected areas management, especially those working in the world heritage sites. It prepared us to be able to draw a management plan and a wide knowledge of the values of archaeological and natural heritages.

Through the programme, I gained a wide view of conservation planning and risk management. I learned how to deal with communities surrounding the reserve and natural catastrophe affecting the heritage site that we protect.

While living in Ireland, I found that Irish people are friendly and the social environment met my expectation, my adaptation was straight forward with no barrier. I had to work hard and feed myself with the university life. The course was both theoretical and practical with well experienced lecturers. Today I still feel part of the Irish society and able to return to Ireland to share my work experience with others and feel at home.



Receiving a life time achievement award from the International Ranger Federation in 2014

When I returned to DRC, it was not easy to adjust. Senior managers sometimes have difficulty accepting the skills and knowledge of newly-trained staff and that sometimes led to conflict. I organised training sessions to share knowledge with colleagues about my course and my research.

In 2010, I got a significant promotion. Since I was able to speak English, it gave me the opportunity to travel and lead some workshops, and I was invited to become part of the team to draw the Transboundary Management Strategic Plan.

One year ago, I was appointed to re-launch the management plan of the Kundelungu Park in the southern DRC. Today I am a Chief Park Warden and aspire to be promoted as Director at managerial level.

In 2014, I received a "Lifetime Achievement Award" from the International Ranger Federation at the IUCN World Parks Congress in Sydney. It was great to get that type of recognition.

Looking into the future, I wish to start a training programme and write a book sharing my experience with others. Although life is full of memories, challenges and success, my time at UCD contributed a lot in boosting my career. At the same time I feel confident to manage any kind of nature reserve through the practical and academic experience I gained in Ireland.

Note: Prior to Irish Aid adopting a partnership approach, it sometimes awarded fellowships to applicants from non-partner countries such as DRC.



Kimmage Manor at Kimmage Development Studies Centre

» The Link takes a closer look at Kimmage DSC, where Irish Aid fellows have been studying since 1993

Kimmage Development Studies Centre (KDSC) was established by the Congregation of the Holy Spirit in 1974. Set on beautiful grounds in the suburbs of Dublin, to date the programme of studies at KDSC has provided education and training to students of all backgrounds, cultures and religious persuasions from over 65 different countries around the world.

Since 1978, KDSC has received funding from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Irish Aid towards assisting with their mission of promoting critical thinking and action for justice, equality and the eradication of poverty in the world.

This is done through facilitating the education and training of individual practitioners and groups working for social, economic and political change in society, and so enabling all practitioners to work effectively for the holistic development of all.

An emphasis is put on creative and dynamic learning that creates a space for critical reflection, dialogue, research and capacity building for grassroots development of

people and communities. KDSC seeks to bridge the divide between development practitioners north and south, between academic and civil society, and between NGOs and the missionary sector.

Graduates of KDSC have gone on to work all over the world, many in senior management positions in NGOs, Faith-Based Organisations and in local government.

Since 1993, more than 180 fellows have studied here through the Irish Aid Fellowship Training Programme. They have come from Ethiopia, Gambia, India, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mongolia, Mozambique, Myanmar, Palestine, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Timor Leste, Uganda, Vietnam, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

In February 2016, the Irish Times wrote an article about three Irish Aid fellows who began studying at KDSC in 2015 (available at <http://bit.ly/1Kc1guv>). Continuing this tradition, three new fellows have begun the MA in International Development in September 2016.

Uganda Irish Alumni Association visit to Ireland



Uganda Irish Alumni Association president, Henry Tumwebaze (far right), and other members meeting with ICOS 'Director, Sheila Power, and Irish Aid's Harriet Sexton-Morel at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade



Visiting the Global Health Centre in TCD



UIAA delegation visits DCU

In September 2016, a delegation from the Uganda Irish Alumni Association (UIAA) visited Ireland for one week.

Members of the delegation included former Irish Aid fellows who had studied in Ireland as far back as 1998, as well as some for whom this was their first visit to Ireland, having studied as regional Irish Aid fellows in Uganda.

The delegation visited the universities they had attended, and also met with representatives of Irish Aid and ICOS at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in Dublin.

Launched in 2014, the UIAA is a very active alumni association. At their meeting with Irish Aid and ICOS, the association's president, Henry Tumwebaze, expressed their desire to inspire and partner with Irish Aid fellowship alumni around the world, and to help others to set up their own alumni associations.

If you would like to learn more about the UIAA, you can visit their website www.ugandairishalumni.org. Here you will also find contact details if you would like to get in touch and learn from their experiences of setting up an alumni association.

Learn more about our new Liberian Study Fellows



Walker Mahn

MSc in Applied Social Research
Trinity College Dublin

Walker's work with Liberia's Drug Enforcement Agency involves collecting, processing and analyzing drug crime statistics.

He has already learned a lot from his course in Applied Social Research at TCD, and looks forward to applying what he has learned to the task of improving data collection surrounding drug crime and abuse in Liberia.

He is settling in well in Ireland, even if the weather and the food have required some adjustment! He finds Irish people to be helpful and kind.

His hope for the future of Liberia is that the basic needs of everyone will be met, and that one day peaceful, fair and transparent elections will be held.

His desire is to one day establish his own NGO that will advocate on behalf of the voiceless in Liberian society, and that will broaden educational opportunities to all of Liberia's children.



Catherine Thomas

MSc in Global Health
Trinity College Dublin

Catherine's experience during the Ebola Virus outbreak in Liberia inspired her to apply for the MSc in Global Health, as she felt that this would enable her to better serve humanity, her country and the world more broadly.

She believes there is much work to be done to improve the Liberian health system, and has gained a lot of knowledge already that will benefit Liberia when she returns.

In particular, she feels that she has learned from the other people on her course, who come from diverse backgrounds and have different experiences of health systems around the world.

For her thesis, Catherine intends to study the Liberian response to the Ebola crisis, with the goal of identifying the areas in which the country's health services were weakest so that they are better prepared for future emergencies.

Her hope is that Liberia will be able to build a resilient health system that will adequately cater to the health needs of its population.



Abdul Koroma

MA in Environment, Society & Development, NUI Galway

Abdul has come to Ireland to enhance his knowledge in the area of water and sanitation - an area in which there is a lack of expertise at the Ministry of Public Works where he is employed in Liberia.

Abdul intends to use what he is learning in NUI Galway to become a change agent that will lead to communities that are both more sustainable and more resilient.

When he returns to Liberia, he hopes to use his newly gained expertise to contribute to better policy formulation, better research, and better programme design.

He is hopeful that the peaceful conditions that currently prevail in Liberia will continue, allowing for continued development and nation-building.

He is conscious that his skills will give him an important role in Liberia's development when he returns, and looks forward to joining others who have returned to support Liberia's government and development partners who refuse to give up hope in the country's potential.



2016 fellows celebrating at the Christmas party at the Mansion House in Dublin

Happy Christmas from Irish Aid & ICOS

» [The Link](#) is published by ICOS on behalf of Irish Aid.

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