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UCC Programme in Planning
and Sustainable Development

Response to the Review of the White Paper on Irish Aid

The Urbanisation of Poverty: drawing on the skills and techniques of Spatial Planning to support the aid programme

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Response on behalf of an Organisation: *U.C.C. PROGRAMME IN PLANNING* *AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT*
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Response to the Review of the White Paper on Irish Aid

The UCC Programme in Planning and Sustainable Development welcomes this consultation on Irish Aid and is strongly supportive of Ireland's historic and ongoing commitment to aid and development. In this spirit, it is hoped that a submission from within our field can add some value to the process by drawing together some distinctive themes to help consolidate the existing strengths of Irish Aid as it reviews and prioritises its approach.

In this document, we focus on increasing levels of urbanisation throughout the world and, in terms of aid and development, we aim to stimulate discussion about how the very challenging phenomenon of the urbanisation of poverty might be addressed. By drawing on the values and place-making principles of the spatial planning discipline, we argue that the prospects for successful sector-based initiatives (such as health, education, environmental protection and community development) are greatly enhanced when they are tackled in an integrated way within their territorial settings.

By 'territorial settings' we mean the very specific spatial contexts of the various places (i.e. national territories, regions, city-regions, towns, rural districts, and neighbourhoods) within which questions about land rights and the use of land, governance, access to water and shelter, access to health facilities and markets, mobility, suitability of employment locations, environmental resilience, and the availability of resources are often the main factors in determining whether key quality of life and sustainable development targets (including climate change ones) can be met.

Spatial planning is a key factor in achieving sustainable urbanisation and this, in turn, is inexorably linked to the prospects for meeting the Millennium Development Goals. In developing our arguments around this theme, our submission pays special attention to 'the changing context' and 'the key issues' as requested by the consultation procedure. We make a number of suggestions / recommendations under these headings (summarised on the following two pages) and we also include a selected list of readings and resources at the end to help make progress with the discussion.

We would be happy to follow up this discussion with any supporting material or other information that might be considered useful. We would make ourselves available for any follow-up discussions or exchanges of views and ideas that might arise from this stage of the consultation.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS / SUGGESTIONS

Changing Context

1. The White Paper should, in a very specific way, acknowledge that recent growth and migration trends have seen a clear and distinctive shift of populations towards cities and city-regions and that, on a global scale, ***the urban population now outnumbers the non-urban one****.*

2. This pattern of rapid and often relentless urbanisation brings with it a particular set of challenges for aid and development policy. The ***urbanisation of poverty*** *should be addressed specifically. This has far-reaching implications not only for cities but for how their rural hinterlands and surrounding regions function.*

3. Consequently, the importance of including ***a territorial dimension to aid / development policy*** *- which complements the sectoral strands - should be recognised. This would involve the use of spatial and land use planning instruments for regions, city-regions, rural districts, neighbourhoods, coastal zones, river basins and other spatial entities as appropriate.*

Key Issues

4. The programme of Irish Aid should now make explicit reference to the issue of ***shelter as a basic human right*** *and address the ways in which the quality of housing (as well as the location of housing and community facilities) affect other key development indicators such as health, education, security, mortality, early childhood development and sustainable employment.*

5. The social and environmental problems caused by the ***informal and un-co-ordinated expansion of cities*** *need to be addressed through targeted spatial planning action. For example, when tackling specific problems such as HIV /AIDS within populations, programmes need to respond to the known urbanisation factors which help to drive it such as the effects of large scale informal settlements.*

6. Effective aid and development programmes should recognise the importance of how ***integrated land use and transportation policies*** *for regions, sub regions and metropolitan areas can ensure more balanced networks of settlements, support more equitable patterns of growth, provide access to markets and employment, sustain food production in rural areas, and manage natural resources in ways that are more resilient to the effects of conflict, hazard and rapid demographic change*

7. Aid responses to issues of climate change and resilience will be more robust if they are analysed and addressed in their ***specific geographical, demographic and cultural settings****. Coastal zones, estuarine areas, uplands and river basins need to be addressed differently. Modelling and planning the necessary mitigation and adaptation measures – which may include the making of new settlements or the re-alignment of existing ones - should be among the approaches to be considered*

8. Whilst growing cities offer a whole range of opportunities for people and for economic development (the so- called 'urban advantage'), ***the urban poor are excluded in various ways and trapped in cycles of deprivation and marginalisation****. This applies particularly to women and to slum dwellers who unlike their rural counterparts don't have the kinship and subsistence traditions that would help with their survival. Specific consideration should be given to programmes addressing quality of life issues for the urban poor.*

Ways of Working

10. Many poorly located development facilities can become ineffective when they are not ***integrated with the needs of their particular locality and the populations that they serve****. It is recommended that when working in particular sectors (such as education, health, rural development, community work, energy, natural resources, environmental protection, transport or business development) aid programmes should test their priorities within the spatial planning context of the district, neighbourhood, city or city region in which they are operating.*

11. The capacity of Governments, local governments and district level institutions to manage, renew and build sustainable settlements and regions is increasingly difficult in globalising and rapidly urbanising settings. Well funded aid projects can often cause an imbalance in the way cities and regions develop and manage their indigenous resources. It is recommended that consolidation of ***skills and competencies in the field of urban and regional planning*** *be developed within local institutions and that these capacity-building initiatives also extend to governance and political engagement.*

12. Continued working with multilateral organisations is strongly encouraged and it is recommended that, in the context of the issues addressed in this submission, Irish Aid explore ***joint working and goal-setting with UN- HABITAT****, the World Urban Forum, and other multinational shelter and planning agencies*

13. Given the long and creative pedigree within the planning discipline for public participation, consensus building, environmental negotiation, and conflict resolution in complex urban settings, it is strongly recommended ***the skills, techniques and methods of the urban and regional planning profession be mobilised*** *within aid programmes and strategies.*

14. In terms of engagement with civil society organisations, due recognition should be given to the way in which community and issue-based organisations are often based on territorial identities. It is recommended that Aid programmes open ***dialogue with urban civil society groups****, especially those that represent the most disadvantaged in society (like NGOs such as Slum Dwellers International etc).*

15. It is recommended that the Irish Aid programme ***engage with the research councils IRCHSS and IRCSET and the planning schools*** *to establish cross disciplinary research into urban and spatial planning issues and techniques for the developing world.*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Programme in Planning and Sustainable Development, which engages in planning education, research and outreach, was established in UCC in 2006. A full member of the Association of European Planning Schools (AESOP), it is one of only two universities on the island of Ireland with professional accreditation from both the Irish Planning Institute (IPI) and the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI).

1.2 The programme - one of the academic units that make up UCC Centre for Global Development - has an international and cross-disciplinary outlook drawing graduate students from a wide range of subject areas including the Social Sciences, Humanities, Science, Engineering, Law, Government, Health, Business, Architecture and others. Its main focus is on the formation of professionals for the discipline of urban and regional planning through masters level education (the UCC M.Plan); its graduates work in the public, private and non-governmental sectors at national, regional and local levels both in Ireland and around the world. We are also well placed to train professionals from abroad to the highest accredited standards.

1.3 The profession of urban and regional planning (also known in different parts of the world as 'town and country planning', city planning', 'urbanism', or more recently 'spatial planning') is a long standing and distinctive discipline which has shaped the development of cities and regions throughout the world for many decades. As a science and an art of place-making Planning as a discipline is inclusive, it is both strategic and local, it is integrative, participatory, creative, embracing of cultural diversity and rooted in concerns for equity. Planning as a discipline is particularly well placed to underpin the management of rural, urban and regional development through private sector, public sector, voluntary sector or community sector action. Planning, and its values and ethics, are fundamental to good governance and a means to develop more equal access to the benefits that cities have to offer.

1.4 In a global development context, the approach of the discipline is best enshrined in the principles initially set out in the Vancouver Declaration on Human Settlements of 1976 and followed up systematically in the work of the World Urban Forum (convened by UN-HABITAT), and which from the point of view of our discipline, has been supported in an explicit way by the World Planners Congress. The following principles are particularly relevant:

- *Recognition of the particular challenges of rapid urbanisation and the urbanisation of poverty*
- *Recognition that sustainable urbanisation is an important contributory component of initiatives to meet the United Nations Millennium Development goals*
- *Recognition of our responsibility to future generations for custodianship of this planet and its habitats, and to those within our own generation who are disadvantaged, especially the poor and those who lack adequate shelter*

2. PROGRESS MADE

2.1 Whilst we don't have any specific comments to make on progress to date, we do recognise that Irish Aid has been a highly effective instrument in addressing global poverty within its targeted sectors. It is felt that the Aid programme is both an important and cost efficient component of Government policy which reflects well on the country and on our commitments as a nation towards equity and the advancement of human rights and dignity.

3. CHANGING CONTEXT

> *"Sometime in the next year or two, a woman will give birth in the Lagos slum of Ajegunle, a young man will flee his village in west Java for the bright lights of Jakarta, or a farmer will move his impoverished family into one of Lima's innumerable pueblos jovenes. The exact event is unimportant and will pass entirely unnoticed. Nonetheless it will constitute a watershed in human history, comparable to the Neolithic or Industrial Revolutions. For the first time the urban population of the earth will outnumber the rural.[1]"*

3.1 The population of cities and urban settlements has been steadily increasing since the 1950s to the point where we can now categorically state that by 2030 more people will live in urban rather than rural areas '*in every region of the world even in Asia and Africa*'[2] . Urbanisation is not a wholly new phenomenon with the fastest demographic expansion of urban areas taking place in the 1950s with urban growth rates of over 3% per annum. This growth rate has slowed down somewhat to 1.9% between 2010 and 2015, however urbanisation will continue to the extent that, globally, 7 out of 10 people will be living in urban areas by 2050.

3.2 Although urbanisation is not limited to the context of the developing world, it is an intrinsic and inevitable part of the development process and is taking place on a scale which is has not yet been seen so far in human history. The processes of urbanisation are producing novel urban configurations functioning as *mega-regions* (such as from São Paulo to Rio de Janeiro which is home to 43 million people), *urban corridors* which contain a number of cities connected along transport and industry routes, and *city-regions* which are large urban conurbations encompassing a number of cities, towns and hinterlands. These changes in spatial configurations will have profound consequences for the future operation of economic, social and political processes.

3.3 Furthermore, there is strong empirical evidence which suggests that as a country's prosperity increases, its degree of urbanisation tends to rise correspondently. A study carried out by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2007) found that of the nine countries and regions surveyed (Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia, Kenya,

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[1] *From 'The Urban Climacteric', Introduction to Planet of Slums by Mike Davis. Verso Press 2006.*

[2] *Figures quoted in this section are derived mainly from UN-HABITAT publications including 'The State of the Word's cities 2010-2011'*

Brazil, India, Liberia, Colombia and China) there was a clear correlation between growth in GDP per capita and the rise in urbanisation. This was with the exception of Liberia which experienced a rise in urbanisation yet a sharp drop in GDP per capita most likely due to the internal conflicts affecting the country. Therefore, if we acknowledge the link between development and urbanisation it is evident that efforts to invest in the economic development of a country should be aware of the potential consequences of this outcome. These consequences may be both beneficial and challenging with some of the world's fastest growing cities facilitating positive outcomes such as technical innovation, economic advancement, higher standards of living and improved employment opportunities (UNHABITAT, 2010). However, poorly managed or disregarded urbanisation patterns have serious repercussions for vulnerable urban citizens whereby the availability of infrastructure and services may not be equal to the numbers of inward migrants to cities, appropriate housing becomes unaffordable to many, pollution is increases due to energy consumption and traffic congestion and a widening gap develops between rich and poor.

3.4 These issues contribute to the growing phenomenon of the urbanisation of poverty which is presenting an increasing challenge for cities and urban areas. The extent of urban poverty is difficult to estimate as a number of key demographics such as slum dwellers, migrant workers and displaced persons may be excluded from poverty assessments. Although poverty still remains less pronounced in urban areas than rural areas, it is increasing. Even though a clear link exists between urbanisation and economic development, however where the benefits of this development are unequally distributed, there will be inevitable negative consequences. These consequences result in increasing levels of inequality and poverty in urban areas which are manifested through growing levels of hunger, poor health and social inequalities. Hunger and malnutrition is especially prevalent in slum areas with many children experiencing higher rates of malnutrition than their counterparts in non-slum areas (UNHABITAT, 2010). In rural areas, availability of food is contingent upon the success of harvests whilst in urban areas the purchasing power of the wealthy leads to the inflation of food prices, blocking access to the poor. This is a fundamental problem with regards to the prevalence of rural development polices in aid programmes in that these do not address the very unique phenomenon which is urban hunger.

3.5 Further challenges are encountered by those living in poverty in urban areas as they are forced to live in the least developed areas which often have significant environmental hazards, which combined with inability to afford medical care and correct nutrition leads to a major health divide in cities. Urban areas may quickly become breeding grounds for illness and disease when the effects of overcrowding, air pollution, unsafe drinking water and poorly managed wastewater lead to the prevalence of diarrhoeal diseases, malaria and acute respiratory infections. Urban poverty is further entrenched through increasing reliance on the informal economy which does not provide security or stability and can lead to the exploitation of workers and vulnerable persons. Scarcity of employment opportunities is cited as the primary cause of poverty and social instability by UNHABITAT and leads to further inequalities regarding social and political exclusion and ideological unrest.

3.6 The reliance on the informal economy, whilst providing a source of much needed income, may serve to reinforce these inequalities and perpetuate a cycle of poverty and subsistence.

Thus, it is evident that the urbanisation of poverty has created a number of unique inequalities and disadvantages which may worsen as greater numbers migrate to urban areas.

3.7 Cities have become facilitators of poverty and inequalities through this gap between rich and poor which often manifests itself in spatial dimensions. Those with the least capacity to provide for themselves are forced to settle in the least desirable areas, often without access to sanitation, water and public transport. This socio-economic clustering is evident both through the prevalence of slum settlements which continue to grow by 10% per year and poor neighbourhoods. Often the challenges encountered regarding shelter and quality of life for the urban poor are addressed through individual initiatives operated by different local authority departments such as water, sanitation or community development. This may result in a fragmented approach to poverty reduction measures. similar issue exists regarding issues in coordination between different tiers of government, especially where financing for projects is concerned. Comprehensive plans for improvements and investments may not be realised where they are not provided for in national budget allocations or where the required skills and techniques are not available at the local authority level. A survey carried out by UNHABITAT found that coordination among different tiers of government was better in terms of economic development processes than for those relating to cultural and political inclusion. However, a cohesive and coordinated approach is needed across these spheres and through all tiers of government (and civil society) in order to effectively challenge urban poverty and social exclusion.

3.8 In terms of recommendations, we suggest that the White Paper should, in a very specific way, acknowledge that recent growth and migration trends have seen a clear and distinctive shift of populations towards cities and city-regions and that, on a global scale, the urban population now outnumbers the non-urban one.

3.9 This pattern of rapid and often relentless urbanisation brings with it a particular set of challenges for aid and development policy. The urbanisation of poverty should be addressed specifically. This has far-reaching implications not only for cities but for how their rural hinterlands and surrounding regions function.

3.10 Consequently, the importance of including a territorial dimension to aid / development policy - which complements the sectoral strands - should be recognised. This would involve the use of spatial and land use planning instruments for regions, city-regions, rural districts, neighbourhoods, coastal zones, river basins and other spatial entities as appropriate.

4. KEY ISSUES

4.1 The scale of urbanisation throughout the world and the urbanisation of poverty are important phenomena on a number of levels. First of all they highlight the cross-sectoral, interdependent and spatial nature of the challenges we are facing. The success or failure of rural development initiatives (education, infrastructure, health) will be manifest one way or another in urban settings not just in the human stories (concerning migration, shelter, job-seeking, basic needs) but also terms of how entire city-regions and states address some enduring sustainability problems (rapid urbanisation, land and development rights, food security, economic development, the emergence of civil society, and management or resources such as water and energy).

4.2 Secondly these issues reminds us of the often fragile relationship that cities have with their natural and political hinterlands; and that patterns of production and consumption are as much related to places and their capacity for development and improvement as they are to the vagaries of economic cycles and natural disasters. There is a clear territorial dimension to these 'life space and economic space' questions which calls for informed spatial planning responses.

4.3 When in seen in the context of resilience and environmental change, these issues also raises a whole range of questions about how, over time, different metropolitan areas, regions and localities deal with questions of land use, resource management, settlement patterns and transportation and also about how institutions, communities and partnership agencies can foster the skills, knowledge and capacity to tackle them effectively.

4.4 We recommend that the programme of Irish Aid should now make explicit reference to the issue of shelter as a basic human right and address the ways in which the quality of housing (as well as the location of housing and community facilities) affect other key development indicators such as health, education, security, mortality, early childhood development and sustainable employment.

4.5 Furthermore, the social and environmental problems caused by the informal and un-co-ordinated expansion of cities need to be addressed through targeted spatial planning action. For example, when tackling specific problems such as HIV /AIDS within populations, programmes need to respond to the known urbanisation factors which help to drive it such as the effects of large scale informal settlements.

4.6 Effective aid and development programmes should also recognise the importance of how integrated land use and transportation policies for regions, sub regions and metropolitan areas can ensure more balanced networks of settlements, support more equitable patterns of growth, provide access to markets and employment, sustain food production in rural areas, and manage natural resources in ways that are more resilient to the effects of conflict, hazard and rapid demographic change

4.7 Aid responses to issues of climate change and resilience will be more robust if they are analysed and addressed in their specific geographical, demographic and cultural settings. Coastal zones, estuarine areas, uplands and river basins need to be addressed differently.

Modelling and planning the necessary mitigation and adaptation measures – which may include the making of new settlements or the re-alignment of existing ones - should be among the approaches to be considered.

4.8 Whilst growing cities offer a whole range of opportunities for people and for economic development (the so- called 'urban advantage'), the urban poor are excluded in various ways and trapped in cycles of deprivation and marginalisation. This applies particularly to women and to slum dwellers who unlike their rural counterparts don't have the kinship and subsistence traditions that would help with their survival. Specific consideration should be given to programmes addressing quality of life issues for the urban poor.

5. WAYS OF WORKING

5.1 It is important that every opportunity to break out of sectoral ways of working should be taken, especially when dealing with complex issues such as sustainability. Many poorly located development project facilities for example can become ineffective when they are not integrated with the needs of their particular locality and the populations that they serve. It is recommended that when working in particular sectors (such as education, health, rural development, community work, energy, natural resources, environmental protection, transport or business development) aid programmes should test their priorities within the spatial planning context of the district, neighbourhood, city or city region in which they are operating.

5.2 The capacity of Governments, local governments and district level institutions to manage, renew and build sustainable settlements and regions is increasingly difficult in globalising and rapidly urbanising settings. Well funded aid projects can often cause an imbalance in the way cities and regions develop and manage their indigenous resources. It is recommended that consolidation of skills and competencies in the field of urban and regional planning be developed within local institutions and that these capacity-building initiatives also extend to governance and political engagement.

5.3 Continued working with multilateral organisations is strongly encouraged and it is recommended that, in the context of the issues addressed in this submission, Irish Aid explore joint working and goal-setting with UN- HABITAT, the World Urban Forum, and other multinational shelter and spatial planning agencies.

5.4 In terms of engagement with civil society organisations, due recognition should be given to the way in which community and issue-based organisations are often based on territorial identities. In this regard it is recommended that Aid programmes open dialogue with urban civil society groups, especially those that represent the most disadvantaged in society (like NGOs such as Slum Dwellers International etc).

5.6 Given the long and creative pedigree within planning discipline for public participation, consensus building, environmental negotiation, and conflict resolution in complex urban settings, it is strongly recommended the skills, techniques and methods of the urban and regional planning profession be mobilised within aid programmes and strategies.

5.7 For example, the need for key skills such as facilitating public consultation and negotiation between key stakeholders are well illustrated in the following planning case study. A local NGO, Dushtha Shasthya Kendra, contributed to the provision of essential water services to an informal settlement in Dhaka, Bangladesh through acting as a mediatory between the local community and the water authority. The water authority had been unwilling to provide services to illegal plot owners and DSK was tasked with negotiating with the organisation to waive this policy and to build water point within the community. This was successfully negotiated, and in collaboration with technical support and funds from outside NGOs, an acceptable water delivery model was devised. This example served as a stimulus for further water projects in the wider area and assured local authorities of the capacity of local communities and organisations to engage with them and with the management of important resources.

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