



An Roinn Gnótháí Eachtracha  
Department of Foreign Affairs

# Ireland's Civil Society Partnership for *A Better World*

## 2023 - 2027

### Strategic Framework

Development Cooperation and Africa Division  
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# Introduction and Purpose

This document sets out the strategic framework for Ireland's Civil Society Partnership for [A Better World](#) (ICSP), which runs from January 2023 for a five-year period.

The ICSP is the successor to the *Programme Grant II (PGII)*, *Humanitarian Programme Plan (HPP)* and *Emergency Response Fund Scheme (ERFS)*. The current cycles of the PGII, HPP and ERFS concluded at the end of 2022. The ICSP brings these funding mechanisms together under one funding scheme and includes Global Citizenship Education. As such, there are four distinct but complementary funding streams for development, chronic humanitarian crises, acute humanitarian crises and global citizenship education.

The scheme reflects the changing global landscape and international commitments. The recommendations of the [external formative evaluation](#) of PGII and the HPP were central to the design. The findings of the [2020 OECD DAC Peer Review of Ireland's Development Co-operation](#) and learning from monitoring visits were also important.

The ICSP facilitates NGO partners to strengthen approaches and deepen focus on issues that underpin strong humanitarian and development programming. Flexibility is built in to allow for responsive and adaptive programming, particularly in fragile contexts. It is expected that ICSP Partners will demonstrate how they can deliver on:

- **Reaching the furthest behind first**, including people who are at risk of becoming more marginalised by placing them at the centre of programmes, partnerships and approaches.
- **Transformative change**, through a strong programmatic approach and effective influencing, including through advocacy, leadership and coordination.
- A deeper focus on **reducing humanitarian need**, through an approach that helps to prevent crises from arising and recurring and, where appropriate, supports linkages across humanitarian, development and peace processes.
- **Strengthening locally-led action**, through supporting and empowering local actors and promoting civil society space.
- **Evidence based programming**, including through strong results based management that uses **quality data** and informs **organisational learning**.
- **Accountability, value for money and risk management** for sustainable development.

# Four Streams

## Overview

The ICSP has four streams: Long-Term Development, Chronic Humanitarian Crises, Acute Humanitarian Crises and Global Citizenship Education:

1. **The Long-Term Development stream** is comparable to PG II, supporting long term development programmes in developing and fragile contexts.
2. **The Chronic Humanitarian Crises** stream is comparable to the HPP, supporting agile and flexible interventions in fragile contexts with a longer time horizon.
3. **The Acute Humanitarian Crises** stream is comparable to the ERFS with pre-positioned annual funding for rapid-response humanitarian action.
4. **The Global Citizenship Education** stream focuses on global citizenship education, including engaging with the public on overseas development issues, and building awareness of the aid programme.

Every ICSP Partner implements work under Stream 1 and work under other streams is in accordance with capacity and experience as appraised at application stage.

## Long-Term Development

The ICSP supports Irish NGO partners to deliver high quality development programmes in countries classified as eligible for assistance by the OECD DAC. Partners are expected to:

- Deliver long-term development programmes which aim to contribute to one or more of the policy priorities set out in *A Better World*, with a focus on selected SDGs and related targets.
- Promote high quality programming and facilitate multi-sectoral responses and diverse approaches for sustainable transformation.
- Focus development efforts on the furthest behind first, targeting extreme poverty and working with communities vulnerable to conflict and the effects of climate change.
- Promote evidence-based approaches to achieve long-term impact across interventions focused on protection, food and people.
- Ensure a programmatic approach with coherent strategies that work at a variety of levels (micro, meso and macro) to contribute to a set of high-level objectives that result in real and strategic change for poor and marginalised communities.
- Provide a strong theory of change with a clear targeting strategy informed by a rigorous context analysis and key context-specific drivers of poverty and marginalisation.
- Demonstrate engagement at the micro, meso and macro levels and linkages between them.
- Deliver a strategic approach to partnership.

- Deliver a strong results-based management approach with systems in place to support this.
- Ensure programmes draw on sound strategic analysis and are coordinated with relevant stakeholders to tackle development gaps and focus on selected SDGs and related targets.
- Promote increased locally led development through support for partnership with local actors and promoting civil society space.

## Chronic Humanitarian Crises

The ICSP provides support for established Irish humanitarian NGO partners to deliver appropriate responses in fragile contexts facing protracted, predictable and recurring crises. NGOs are expected to:

- Deliver effective and efficient humanitarian and protection related interventions with a focus on Reducing Humanitarian Need and relevant SDGs and targets.
- Demonstrate a strong needs-based approach and adherence to humanitarian principles.
- Use quality data to ensure a focus on the furthest behind first, including women and girls and people living with a disability.
- Contribute actions towards the effective coordination of the humanitarian response at national and sub-national level.
- Support programmes that are appropriately agile and responsive to dynamic and evolving needs.
- Demonstrate a reinvigorated focus on preventing crises arising or escalating and anticipating shocks ahead of a predictable crisis.
- Where possible, address humanitarian needs in a way that builds resilience and supports climate adaptation efforts.
- Strengthen locally led humanitarian responses, through supporting and empowering local partners and stakeholders.
- Articulate an approach that contributes to cohesive humanitarian, development and peace actions, where appropriate, in fragile contexts.

## Acute Humanitarian Crises

The Acute Humanitarian Crises stream pre-positions funds at the beginning of each year with participating humanitarian NGOs. It underscores Ireland's commitment to the timely provision of humanitarian aid and protection to save lives, alleviate human suffering and maintain human dignity. This is central to delivering on our commitment to reach the Furthest Behind First. It is designed to facilitate our partners to:

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1 As a guide, the following can be used as definition of different levels of change: realising a set of immediate and direct benefits for targeted groups (micro level changes); partnership with the responsible local authorities and /or other relevant structures to bring systemic change within an area to widen the reach of benefits (meso level changes); strengthening institutional arrangements (policies, legislation, institutions, programming) at regional and/or national level in ways that can sustain improvements (macro level changes).

- Respond rapidly and effectively to the onset of a sudden emergency, before additional funding is secured.
- Provide timely assistance in response to a spike in needs in an existing protracted humanitarian crisis.
- Deliver humanitarian assistance to both large scale humanitarian crises and smaller, less visible crises.
- Implement anticipatory action based on clear methodology and triggers to prevent the onset of an acute crisis.

## Global Citizenship Education

The ICSP supports engagement with the Irish public on Ireland's overseas development cooperation, and promote a greater understanding of development issues and our global interconnectedness through global citizenship education. Successful applicants will:

Promote global citizenship education, so that Irish people are equipped with the skills and knowledge they need to be active global citizens. This includes supporting engagement and education that deepens understanding of sustainable development issues, the root causes of poverty and our global interconnectedness.

Engage with the Irish public to build awareness and understanding of the Irish Aid programme, so they are aware of how it is addressing poverty and inequality on their behalf.

# Policy Framework

This section sets out the policies most relevant to Ireland's civil society partnerships.

## International Commitments and Frameworks

Recent relevant political commitments and international frameworks include the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals](#); the [EU Consensus on Development](#) (2017); [Paris Climate Accord](#) (2015); [the World Humanitarian Summit](#) (2016); the [Grand Bargain](#) (2016); [Grand Bargain 2.0](#) (2021); the [Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation Effectiveness](#) (2016); the OECD [DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus](#) (2019); and the OECD [DAC Recommendation on Enabling Civil Society](#) (2021).

The OECD DAC [Recommendation on Enabling Civil Society](#) addresses three inter-linked pillars of how development co-operation and humanitarian assistance providers should enable civil society by: (i) respecting, protecting and promoting civic space; (ii) supporting and engaging with civil society; and (iii) incentivising civil society effectiveness, transparency and accountability.

The OECD [DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus](#) requires adherents to strengthen policy and operational coherence between humanitarian, development and peace efforts, with the "aim of effectively reducing people's needs, risks and vulnerabilities, supporting prevention efforts and thus, shifting from delivering humanitarian assistance to ending need". An aspect of this involves finding ways to incentivise NGOs to address the nexus for better coordination and consistency between development, humanitarian and peace.

## Ireland's Policy Framework

Ireland's Foreign Policy for a changing world '[Global Island](#)', and Ireland's strategy for engagement in Africa '[Global Ireland: Ireland's Strategy for Africa to 2025](#)' both refer to the importance of sustaining the work of civil society organisations and human rights defenders on the ground. They recognise the vital role played by civil society in building peaceful, inclusive and prosperous societies. Global Ireland highlights the need for increased response to humanitarian and development challenges in Africa, while providing high quality, principled humanitarian assistance.

A Better World recognises the importance of civil society in supporting development and human rights and in the delivery of humanitarian assistance and protection. It reiterates Ireland's strong commitment to supporting and protecting civil society space. It reaffirms the importance of civil society partners with regard to Ireland's influence and interventions for the protection of human rights. It commits to strengthening collaboration with Irish civil society partners on public engagement and outreach.

A Better World sets out four high level policy priorities that provide a framework for our development cooperation: gender equality, reducing humanitarian need, climate action and strengthening governance. It also identifies key areas of intervention that fall under these policy priorities – people (including health and education), food and protection. This approach plays to our strengths, whilst also responding to key global challenges and provides strong parameters for our development cooperation. Ireland's NGO partners, and civil society more generally, have a unique and critical role in advancing these priorities and key areas of intervention. The ICSP is an important vehicle to support this.

## ***Furthest Behind First***

In line with the Sustainable Development Goals, Ireland is committed to ensuring that the needs of those that have been left furthest behind – and people who are at risk of becoming more marginalised – are at the centre of our programmes, partnerships and approaches.

Reaching the furthest behind first requires a strong focus on the most fragile contexts. In 2020, fragile contexts accounted for almost a quarter of the world's population and over three quarters of those living in extreme poverty (OECD [DAC 2020 States of Fragility Report](#)). COVID-19 has magnified the underlying drivers of fragility and we are witnessing a trend of rising inequality – with the furthest behind being left even further behind. A Better World commits Ireland to bolster how we engage in fragile contexts as a key strategy to reach the furthest behind.

Identifying and supporting the furthest behind requires partners to demonstrate capacity for strong analysis, targeting and monitoring on poverty, vulnerability, exclusion and gender; to balance cost and innovation; and to manage risk. Ireland recognises that reaching the furthest behind first requires an interdisciplinary approach which is multidimensional, intersectional and context-specific. Programmes need to consider that those who are furthest behind may (i) experience multiple forms of poverty, exclusion and vulnerability; (ii) experience different forms of poverty, exclusion and vulnerability when interacting with others; and (iii) have different needs in different places at different times.

Reaching the furthest behind in the context of a humanitarian response requires an approach that moves beyond the number of people in need to consider the severity of needs. To do this, systematic, coordinated, multi-sectoral needs assessments and the appropriate and timely sharing of data must be standard practice.

## ***Gender Equality***

A Global Island, A Better World, and our [Third National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security](#) highlight the centrality of gender equality to Ireland's foreign and development policy and contain

a wide range of policy commitments in relation to advancing gender equality. In 2020, Ireland also endorsed the [EU's Gender Equality Action Plan](#) which sets an approach to gender equality based on three key pillars – a gender transformative approach, a rights-based approach and an intersectional approach.

This commits the Department to ensuring that we have an overarching focus on gender equality in all of our partnerships and interventions. As part of this, Ireland has committed to increasing our investment across many areas. This includes, *inter alia*, work which (i) directly and principally supports gender equality; (ii) aims to transform gender relations and challenge the negative and discriminatory social norms which perpetuate gender inequality; and (iii) invests in feminist and women's rights organisations both directly and through other partnerships.

From a thematic perspective, Ireland is committed to advancing gender equality across a range of areas, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, women's political participation, women's economic empowerment, education, responding to and preventing gender based violence and supporting gender justice in climate action. Ireland also has a strong focus on women and girls in its humanitarian work.

### ***Reducing Humanitarian Need***

A Better World identifies reducing humanitarian need as a key pillar of Ireland's development cooperation. This pillar speaks to the increasing number, complexity and protracted nature of crises - often cross-border in nature and driven by conflict, disasters and climate related events. Ireland recognises that its response must reflect the multi-faceted nature of these crises and address both the immediate humanitarian needs and drivers of risk and vulnerability.

The provision of quality humanitarian assistance, including protection, remains a priority for Ireland as a principled donor with a strong needs-based approach. This means supporting NGO partners to respond to needs wherever they are – and to sustain engagement in situations of conflict and fragility. Multi-year humanitarian funding enables NGO partners to deliver an approach that is innovative, people-centred, accountable to the populations that they serve and supportive of local actors. It also promotes a strong targeting approach that identifies particularly vulnerable and excluded groups, including women and girls and people living with disabilities.

A strengthened focus on prevention is central to reducing humanitarian need. Key to this is supporting preparedness efforts, anticipating the onset of humanitarian needs, building resilience to shocks and stresses, supporting climate adaptation and conflict prevention and peacebuilding. A central element of this is a focus on women's participation, women's leadership and local ownership in conflict prevention and peacebuilding actions and processes.

Ireland believes that by supporting actions to make systems and structures stronger and more inclusive we can have greater impact and reduce humanitarian need. Irish civil society has an important part to play at global, national and local level. This ranges from policy and advocacy engagement to leadership and coordination roles. We are committed to supporting strong civil society engagement that brings real added value to the humanitarian response and ultimately to the actions and results across the system.

## ***Climate Action***

A Better World sets out Ireland's commitment to climate change action in our aid programme. We have committed to double the percentage of ODA spent on climate action by 2030. This requires a scaling up of climate specific financing as well as careful consideration of climate change adaptation across all our work. As signatories to the Principles of Locally Led Adaptation, Ireland supports efforts to improve financing flows to local levels, making decisions more inclusive and equitable.

Climate justice underlies Ireland's climate action in our ODA with a focus on gender and vulnerability. We prioritise support to adaptation and resilience efforts, including efforts to avert, mitigate and address loss and damage due to climate change. Building on Ireland's work on the UN Security Council, we are increasing our focus on the links between climate and security, with climate change as a potential driver of conflict, and vice-versa.

Civil society partners are strongly encouraged to support Ireland's growing prioritisation of climate change action. For partners with established programmes and expertise, this could involve scaling up or increasing finance to climate action where needs are identified, while others may wish to start engaging in climate change action for the first time. Efforts to strengthen climate risk analysis and responses are important – particularly for anticipatory action, disaster risk reduction and humanitarian responses.

## ***Strengthening Governance***

A Better World stresses that strengthening governance and human rights are fundamental to the achievement of the SDGs. It recognises the need for both effective and accountable institutions at national and sub-national level to deliver transformative change, socio-economic growth and the realisation of human rights. It also highlights the importance of civil society and civil society space to ensure that processes and outcomes are participative and inclusive.

Ireland's approach is in line with the ambition of SDG 16 on Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, which seeks to ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels of governance. This commits Ireland and its partners to strengthen its political economy analysis, engage with local contexts and institutions, invest in the capacity of local civil society actors

and governments, strengthen demand-side accountability, advocate for inclusive and effective governance and adapt programming as necessary.

Respect for international law, including human rights law and where applicable, international humanitarian law, are important aspects of governance, particularly in conflict affected and fragile contexts. As conflict is the main driver of humanitarian need, and as humanitarian access is increasingly compromised, upholding these laws is vital to provide life-saving protection and to enable humanitarian actors to safely access and assist populations in need.

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