INTRAC
International NGO Training and Research Centre

Aidlink
enabling communities
in Africa tackle poverty

STRATEGIC PLAN

2012-2015

Executive Summary

Aidlink is an international development organisation working to improve the lives of people living in poverty in Africa. In 2012 Aidlink marked its 30th year working in development for its first 14 years volunteers managed this work and their partnerships developed in Ireland and across Africa. In 1997 a full-time Executive Director was appointed to Aidlink. Currently there are 3 full time staff supported by a fully functioning Board of Directors (10) who oversee the strategy, management and governance of Aidlink's Board committees include: audit; risk management; remuneration and director performance review.

Over the past 10 years, Aidlink has progressed from funding a wide range of organisations to developing more strategic relationships with a smaller number of organisations. Their commitment to a partnership approach; their inclusive planning with partners and deeper engagement with the wider international development and development education sectors have built their reputation as a trustworthy international development organisation, and Aidlink is recognised as a worthwhile donor investment.

Currently Aidlink is supporting local partners and, through financial and technical support, is strengthening partners in Kenya, Uganda and Ghana to contribute towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. To date this has comprised cross-sectoral commitments, namely: water and sanitation, primary health care, education and food security. Increasing access to clean water and sanitation is commonly the foundation of the integrated programme.

Through its commitment to learning from its partners and other actors internationally, Aidlink's Strategic Plan (2012-2015) will focus on how their adoption of a rights framework will bring about long-term and sustainable change. This is in line with the needs of partners, whilst responding directly to the preferred approach of donors.

Increasingly it has become clear to Aidlink that the idea of interdependence of human rights has become strongly established in the countries of its work. Recognising poverty as a human rights violation, Aidlink will endeavour to support governments and communities to face up to the challenge of combating the root causes of poverty and to reach and empower poor people. This is where Aidlink's rights framework becomes relevant.

Aidlink starts from the position that all people are entitled to a certain standard of well being, taking the side of the people who suffer injustice by acknowledging their equal worth and dignity and emphasising rights and responsibilities.   Aidlink's approach is one that regards poor people not simply as beneficiaries, but as active rights-holders with responsibilities; it regards duty-bearers as those states and other actors whom corresponding rights claims can be made. The concept of rights-holders and duty-bearers introduces an element of accountability into Aidlink's development work, ie: development by the people and not for the people.

Aidlink's international partnerships are formed on well-established criteria which are based on core values which recognise that every person should be treated with dignity and they have the right to engage in self and community development. In line with this, Aidlink supports its partners through the provision of resources, support and technical assistance for effective programme implementation and organisational development that enhances learning, replication and sustainable change.
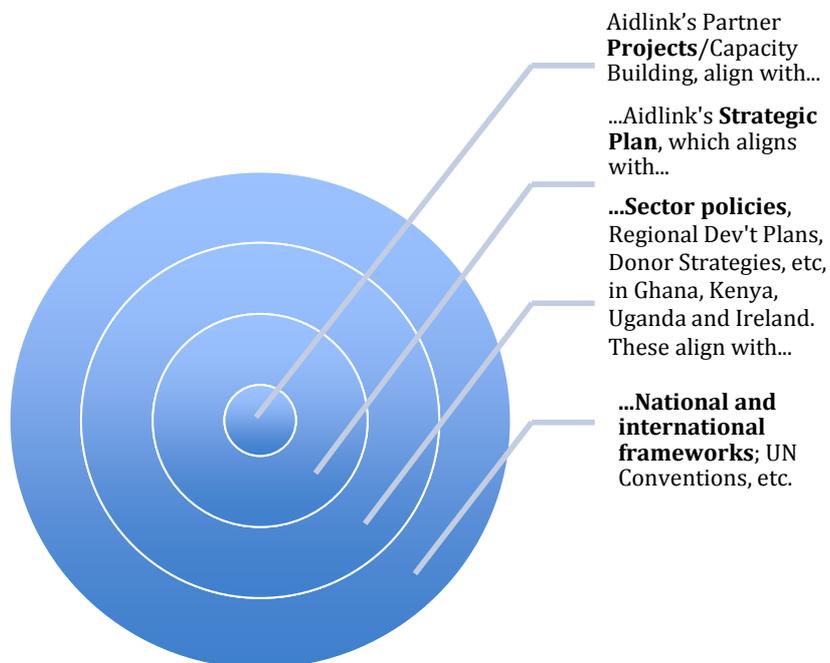
Aidlink's African-based partners are:

- Caritas MADDO (the development office for the Diocese of Masaka), Uganda
- EMESCO Development Foundation, Uganda
- Voluntary Action for Development, Uganda

- The Diocese of Lodwar, Kenya
- The Girl Child Network, Kenya
- The Spiritans Province of Ghana

However, the work of Aidlink is more than the sum of its parts in terms of its partnership support in three countries of Africa. In Ireland Aidlink plays an important role through its ability to contextually analyse international development issues from a national and international perspective and by facilitating the sharing of learning widely through networks, alliances and close relationships with donors.

Prior to engaging with partners in Africa and in Ireland, Aidlink's capacity to analyse the national and international contexts in which it works have been central to its success. One such example is evidenced by the disaster risk reduction strategies impact in Kajiado and Turkana. Integral to Aidlink's activities to date is the importance of contextual analysis. It has, however, come to light that this is not always obvious to all donors and that this has been regarded as a weakness; the 2012-2015 Strategic Plan aims to address this. In order to demonstrate to donors and partners that Aidlink's approach is one which focuses on enhancing long-term and sustainable change, it will endeavour to be more strategic in its contextual analysis process with partners and findings from contextual research will be articulated when reporting to donors.

Aidlink's Partner **Projects**/Capacity Building, align with...

...Aidlink's **Strategic Plan**, which aligns with...

...**Sector policies**, Regional Dev't Plans, Donor Strategies, etc, in Ghana, Kenya, Uganda and Ireland. These align with...

...**National and international frameworks**; UN Conventions, etc.

The diagram above shows that coherence and integration among development partners and stakeholders is central to Aidlink's success and sustainability

Results-based management is a process whereby an organisation can ensure that all its activities contribute to the achievement of its desired results. Its accountability for results require systematic monitoring against its goal and strategic objectives, self-assessment and reporting on progress. Aidlink's commitment to Results Based Management will ensure ownership by its partners, based on how they contribute to national development priorities and strategies. The Strategic Plan (2012-2015) is enhanced by Aidlink's appreciation that they do not work in a vacuum, but are contributing to wider global strategies. Aidlink's added value is rooted in its belief that rights go beyond the notion of physical needs and include a more holistic perspective of human beings, particularly in terms of their social, economic and cultural roles – they support their partners with this shift in development thinking.

The capacity of Partners will be enhanced to work within a rights framework; they will raise the question of who has obligations in relations to these rights and will support poor people as equal human beings in their efforts to demand their rights and address the poverty and injustice in their lives – in order for this to be sustainable this will be in line with national and international strategies and legislation.

Aidlink is a key player in development education in Ireland and a founding partner of the development education website developmenteducation.ie. An important focus of Aidlink's work is its Schools Immersion Programme. The aim is to promote a greater understanding of the causes of poverty and inequality and to build a constituency of people who actively engage with, participate in and support Ireland's international development agenda, with an understanding of the rights framework.

Since 2004, Aidlink has worked on individual school and clustered school development education activities. A key initiative is the link between St Mary's College, Rathmines, Dublin and St James' Secondary School in Sunyani in Ghana; a series of immersion visits for the boys have taken place.

Aidlink's Development Education partners in Ireland are:

- St Mary's College, Rathmines, Dublin
- Seamount College, Kinvara, Co Galway
- 80:20; Concern; Self-Help Africa; National Youth Council of Ireland; Irish Aid

Key supporters and funders

Following an organisational review in 2007, Aidlink's partnership with Irish Aid strengthened and they received over €3M from Irish Aid in block grant funding from June 2008 to December 2011. However, the economic crunch led to a series of reductions in funding during the period 2008-2011. This required the Aidlink Board to adopt even more prudent measures to Aidlink's activity planning and partner support.

More recently, in 2012, Aidlink was selected as a development partner by Irish Aid to receive further funding support. The multi-annual programme grant (2012-2015) is based on a percentage allocation of Irish Aid's annual programme fund and translated to a grant allocation of 548k in 2012. Regrettably the level of funding made available was less than in previous years, which highlighted the urgency for Aidlink to diversify its resource base for both restricted and unrestricted income in order to reduce the impact of this reduction.

To date Aidlink has not faced a net reduction in funding from Third World Groups, corporate sector and individual donors. Nonetheless, strategically Aidlink's vigilant

approach ensures value for money and provides evidence to donors that every euro is stretched whilst continuing to support partners to deliver impact.

Aidlink is a relatively small player in a turbulent market. International development funding and trends in Ireland are difficult to interpret. However, Aidlink's internal financial controls and systems of good governance ensure transparency and accountability. Aidlink appreciates the importance of aligning with the donors' development approach to build the capacity of its partners to connect communities with policy makers to bring about long-term, sustainable change.

Achievements to date
Aidlink's concept of partnership has evolved into a strategic alliance of equals with the power being balanced by the mutual benefits that both partners bring. A relationship of trust has developed between Aidlink and its partners that has been built on an understanding each other, their contexts, the causes of poverty and the changing development environment.

Aidlink has a strong focus on supporting access to clean water and sanitation; however, experience has shown support to water and sanitation projects to be an entry into cross-sectoral activities that improve the lives of those living in poverty. There is clear inter-dependency across the sectors and Aidlink partners provide support across sectors, eg: water and sanitation, health, education and agriculture.

Through Aidlink's technical, cross-sectoral support to capacity building interventions, the partner organisations are becoming stronger and more professional. Their increased capacity has a knock-on effect on their target communities who are increasingly engaged in both self and community development efforts, as reported in external evaluations. Although much of the work of the partners has been grounded in a needs based approach in the past, all of the partners are committed to building the capacity of their constituents to take responsibility for bringing about sustainable positive change in their own lives and those of their communities and are committed to working within a rights framework.

Aidlink's support to water and sanitation projects in schools has had the additional outcome of changing negative attitudes towards girls' rights. The partnership with the Girl Child Network (GCN) in Kenya has supported the implementation of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child whilst specifically promoting the rights of the girl child.

In addition to accessing clean water in school, another outcome of the water and sanitation programme in Kajiado in Kenya is to enhance the access, enrolment, retention rates and transition of girls in education. Girls' drop-out rates in primary education have reduced since the GCN advocated for the Government to agree and implement a gender-sensitive education policy which has approved €3m to offer free sanitary towels to those who would otherwise have absented themselves from school during menstruation every month. An additional planned result has been that through an increased understanding of girls' rights, the prevalence of Female Genital Mutilation in this region has reduced.

Aidlink is supporting projects in some of the poorest and drought-prone regions of Kenya; this includes a partnership with the Diocese of Lodwar (DoL) in the County of Turkana, an area of extreme poverty with literacy rates at 17%. Turkana is a pastoralist society where people rely predominantly on livestock, milk and blood. Aidlink's support to DoL led to the successful piloting of a hunger and drought response project that was able to react quickly to the 2011 drought. In addition to

organised farmers groups, the development of small-scale irrigation schemes comprised part of the food-for-work component of the programme. The DoL continues to work with communities on alternative livelihood strategies and communities are increasingly engaging with agriculture as a result.

In Uganda, Aidlink works closely with their partners in areas of water and sanitation, health, education and agriculture/food security. Partnerships with MADDO, EMESCO and VAD have enabled Aidlink to realise its mission of supporting community-led development initiatives with those living in poverty, whilst providing partners with capacity building support in programme management. Project support includes integrated development programmes, which focus on empowerment and exercising fundamental human rights in line with those outlined in the Ugandan Constitution; the are inclusive of the most vulnerable members of their target communities.

In Ghana Aidlink supports the Spiritans, Province of Ghana's projects the focus in education specifically school's WATSAN. Recent projects focus on the semi-arid Northern Regions of Ghana.

Aidlink has a wealth of direct experience in designing and delivering immersion programmes. Aidlink has a proven capacity to facilitate all necessary practical planning, administration and logistics for immersion trips with proven strong health and safety standards. This is an education programme with a learner centred approach and is embedded in schools with a focus on Irish students going to school with their peers in the developing world. From the first programme in 2004 where 10 students from one Dublin school engaged in the Aidlink facilitated immersion programme the partnership has flourished and the programme has grown exponentially with 56 students travelling to Ghana in 2012. In 2011, for the first time, Aidlink and St Mary's College, Rathmines, Dublin, hosted Ghanaian students and teachers on a return visit to Ireland and facilitated its first all girls school immersion programme when students from Seamount College, Kinvara, Co Galway visited the Notre Dame Senior Secondary for Girls, Sunyani, Ghana.

Identity of Aidlink

Vision: Aidlink has a vision of a world that recognises the dignity of each individual person having the right, the duty and the means of self and community development.

Mission: Aidlink exists to improve the lives of those living in poverty in Africa.

We realise this by supporting the capacity of partners to mobilise local communities to:

- Participate in their development process
- Access their basic needs
- Demand their fundamental human rights

This is further enhanced through:

- Development education in Ireland to promote an understanding of poverty and inequality in Africa.

Aidlink's Approach:

Partnership for Aidlink means a shared vision and commitment to work together to bring real and sustainable benefits to poor and marginalised people. Aidlink's partnership approach harnesses the unique contribution and strengths of each partner, working together to achieve shared objectives in an open, accountable and transparent manner to bring about community-owned and sustainable change in the lives of people living in poverty. The programmes supported are grounded in a participatory approach in consultation with local communities, local/district authorities and partner organisations.

Aidlink has a Partnership Strategy in place which highlights the criteria which is required to form a partnership between Aidlink and its CSO Partners and, thus, forms the basis of a formal agreement.

Aidlink believes that a strong civil society can influence long-term and sustainable change and, to this end, adopts the use of a **rights framework**. A central dynamic of Aidlink's rights based approach is about identifying root causes of poverty, empowering rights-holders to claim (demand) their rights and enabling duty-bearers to meet their obligations. Aidlink recognises the complexity of poverty. Aidlink perceives poverty within the structures of power and inequality that is embedded in the local, national and global context.

The rights framework refers principally to human rights drawn from UN Conventions and Covenants in line with the needs of communities in the sectors in which it works, ie: the fundamental rights to water and sanitation; education; health and food security. The 'Convention' rights are particularly important because they have been given further effect in Ghanaian, Kenyan and Ugandan law through their national constitutions and laws.

A rights framework supports Aidlink's partners to:

- Strengthen their rights focus in programming
- Acknowledge the complexity of poverty and the relationships involved
- Make the right planning decisions when faced with complex problems
- Work with, and build alliances between, communities and policy-makers at all levels to influence change that ensures that public services meet the needs of individual users
- Ensure that decisions arrived at are made objectively and take into account the effect on all the stakeholders involved

Aidlink's summary Theory of Change (Working draft)

Partners have the ability and means to monitor Communities in self and community development

Communities have the capacity to be fully involved in self and community development processes

Communities are fully participating in self and community development and exercising their right to demand access to services.

Aidlink has the capacity to support Partners to monitor and learn from outcomes

Partners understand the rights agenda, national legislation and roles and responsibilities of rights holders and duty bearers

Communities have an understanding of their rights and responsibilities and the related duty bearers

Aidlink institutionalises the importance of the rights' agenda with partners in terms of long -term sustainability

Communities are able to consider their specific needs in relation to community development and to define their associated human rights

Partners have the capacity to strengthen the communities in community development skills and to enhance their understanding of development through a rights framework

Aidlink has the skills to strengthen partners' understanding and skills to link community development, human rights and long-term sustainable change

Strategic Planning Process

The process began in August 2012 when stakeholders were requested to consider a series of questions to encourage them to reflect on the impact and learning of Aidlink; the unique strengths of the organisation and what drives Aidlink. The responses were considered at the start of the process, during planning, and re-visited during the workshop.

A 3-day workshop took place including staff and members of the board, which was facilitated by an external facilitator. The enthusiastic involvement of staff was based on their understanding that this period was an opportunity to define what the organisation is and to plan in line with this. It was agreed that the process was needed to:

- Reflect back on what has made an impact in the past – learning from experience
- Look up from day-to-day issues and try to see the big picture for the future
- Build teamwork and expertise
- To bring coherence to different projects and parts of the organisation, ensuring they are pulling together
- Prioritise where to focus energies and resources in the future to maximise potential for achieving its mission

It was also understood that the process of strategic planning can be difficult to do and the following reasons were taken into consideration:

- There is considerable need and pressure to respond, it's often difficult to say 'no'.
- Development is a complex process and sectors are interconnected, eg: Aidlink supports the fundamental right of access to safe water and to sanitation – which provides good reason to support agriculture and livelihood projects; which make a direct link to health – so provides good reason to support health projects; education is the key to good health – so there is good reason to work on education projects…   All respond directly to the achievement of the MDGs and align with the vision and mission of Aidlink, but some may feel that there is a lack of organisational focus.
- Aidlink needs to secure funding from donors to continue – it can be risky to prioritise - if the donors decide to change their priorities.
- Strategic planning requires predicting the future – something impossible to do perfectly, yet we need to consider *where we are now and develop a strategy towards a desired future state*.
- In a small organisation, they often feel too busy to stop and think – there may also be strong vested interests and comfort levels in remaining in the *status quo*.

The strategic planning for Aidlink has been a process of making choices and documenting them. The choices have been based on:

- Knowing who we are
- Knowing what change brings
- Predicting how the environment is likely to change
- Rigorous and honest self-appraisal

The Aidlink strategic planning workshop was about making hard choices; it is not possible to skate in two different directions so consideration had to be given to prioritising and not simply making a shopping list. It was agreed that the essence of the Aidlink strategic plan was to decide what to prioritise, whilst considering the relevance of current approaches and giving thought to changes that might be required to really make a difference.

The Aidlink strategic plan is a big picture document; it is a directional document lasting from 2012 to 2015 and it will be complemented by an operational plan that focuses on shorter-term goals for a 12-month period. The operational plan will detail who should do what, by when and how much it will cost.

There is no set process or template for strategic planning. The process was guided by an external facilitator from INTRAC. The process followed five principles of good practice in strategic planning.

Key Ingredients[1]

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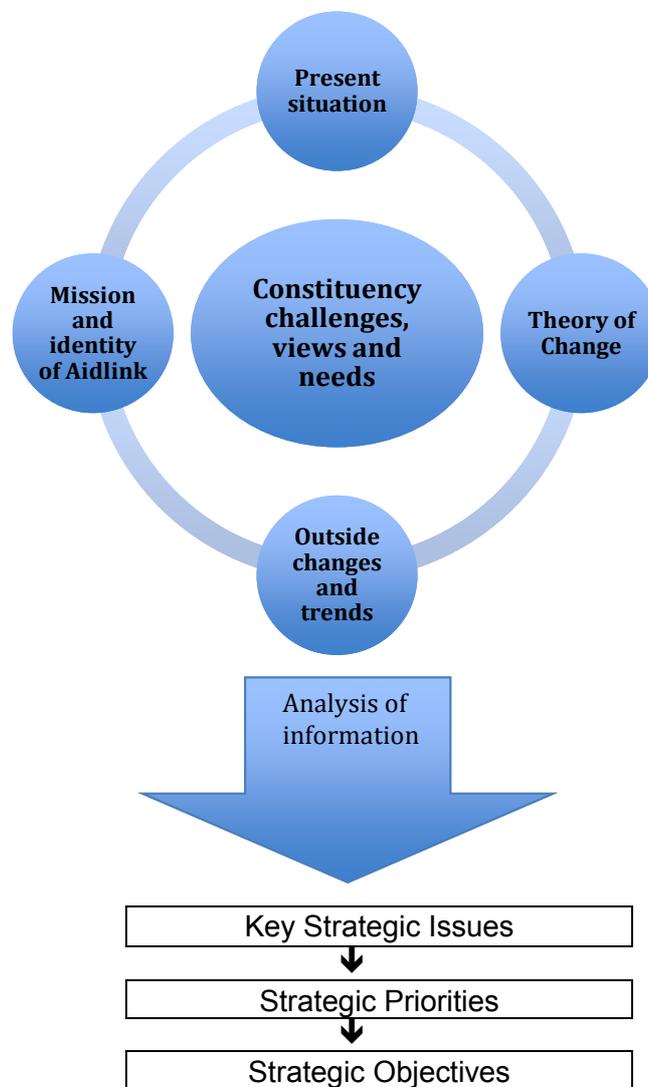
[1] Adapted from Bruce Britton, Framework

The mission, identity, theory of change, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats are mixed together to identify the key strategic issues facing Aidlink over the next few years. From this analysis strategic objectives and priorities were made.
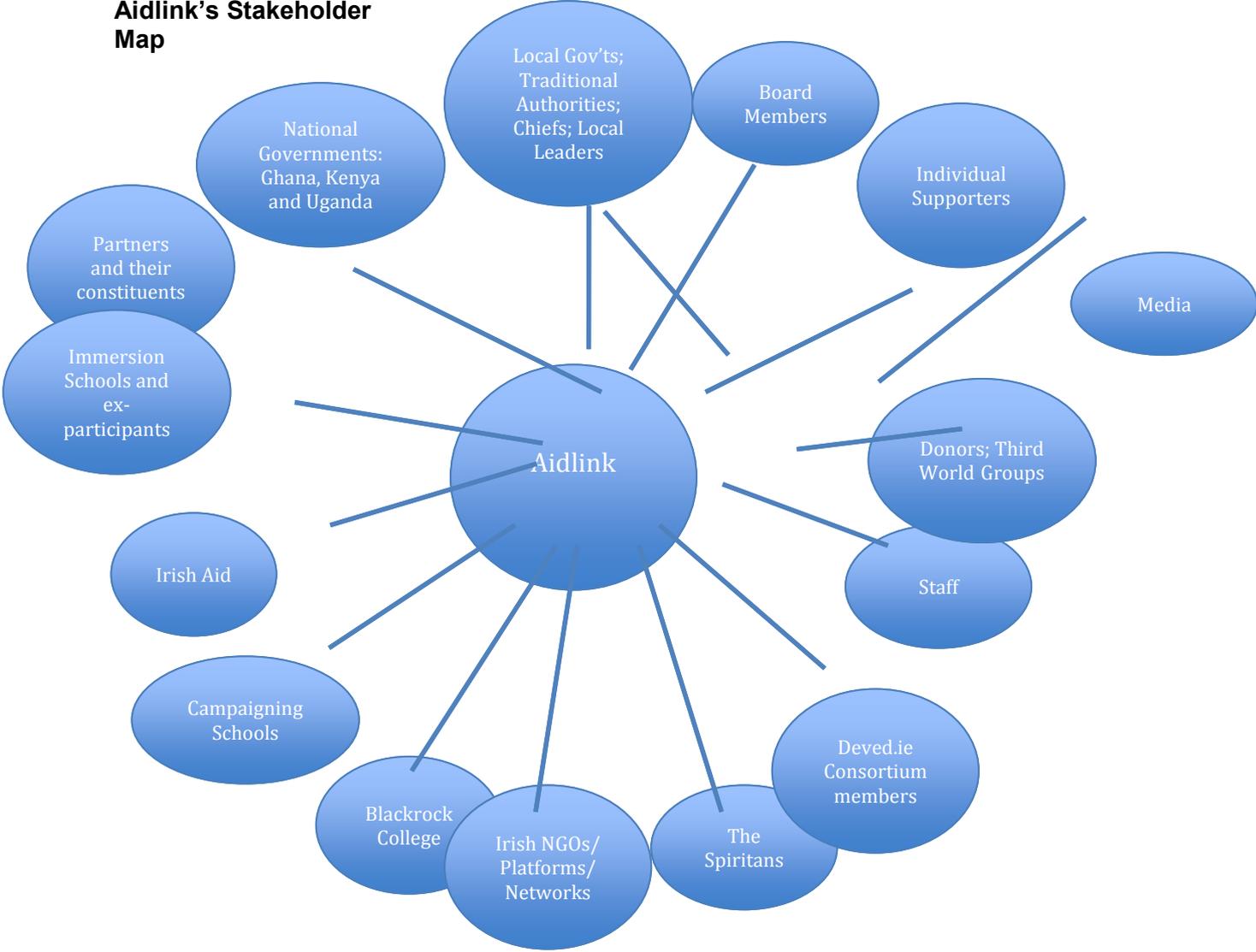
Analysis of external environment

A PESTLE analysis was carried out to analyse Aidlink's external environment.

Political	Economic
- EU Presidency ➔ post MDG Summit, Sept 2013, therefore commitment to .07% agenda - Election in 2015 – non threatening to Aid - Kenyan elections, 2013 - Kenyan relations with Somalia (security issues) - Ugandan elections (security) - Ghana elections (less threatening) - West Africa instability - European priorities - US interest (Ghana) - Security	- Unlikely to be a significant improvement during the next 3 years - Increased competitiveness for the reduced resources (Aidlink is not a known brand) - TWGs/public not taking risks, eg: not signing up to 'new' organisations - Ireland –v- overseas' needs (poverty priorities) - Rising prices (globally) - Oil in Turkana (social/economic/ environmental implications) - Exchange rates - GDP/GNP –v- inequality - Too many NGOs doing the same thing (perception – bigger is better: more cost effective)
Social	**Technological**
- Irish perceptions of Kenya/Uganda/Ghana - Corruption - Commercialisation of aid (the Aid Business) - Professional accountability –v- welfare and charity (altruism) debate - Independent –v- inter-dependent sectors amongst partners - Security - Diversity and rights - Gender rights/status of women and girls - Traditional beliefs and customs	- Improved communication (national and international) - Financial transfers - Income generation opportunities - Organisational level – improved access to information - Community level – radio is still predominant in accessing information - Access to internet in urban environments - Tools for learning at community level - Greater information flow - Fundraising tool – social media, etc - Communication with supporters - Website – transparency increased - Strengthened capacity of partners/ partnerships - Instant (over?) exposure to global images - Can be challenging to autocratic systems of government - Sharing learning and best practice is cost-efficient (S-S; S-N; N-N; N-S)
Legal	**Environmental**
Legal framework in process of change – charity legislation may lead to charity legislator	- Drought - Flooding - Drilling oil in Turkana

• Partners registered in their own context – complying with national tax and employment terms • Legal frameworks (relevant) providing legitimacy for the rights work that Aidlink supports • National Constitutions • UN Conventions and Covenants • Partners role in sharing legal content/making it accessible locally • The role of partners in reviewing/revising/ introducing new laws; monitoring implementation of laws • Lobbying and advocating for legal change	• Impact of Sthn Ethiopian Dam on River Omo and the whole region • +ve impact of Aidlink's small-holder support • +ve impact of Aidlink's water and sanitation support to partners • Climate change (adaptations) • Climate change (traditional practice) • Impact on women • Land use – potential • Fish stocks dwindling • Lake Victoria receding

Aidlink's Stakeholder Map

Stakeholder Analysis

		Low	Medium	High
Aidlink's impact/influence on stakeholder	**High**	**Essential to involve**	**Essential to involve**	**Essential to involve** Partners; staff; Board; Immersion Schools; Irish Aid; Partners' constituents
	Med	**Desirable to involve** Deved.ie members	**Desirable to involve** Irish NGOs/Platforms/ Networks Partners' National Gov'ts	**Essential to involve** Partners' local gov'ts; traditional authorities; chiefs; local leaders
	Low	**Involve if possible** Partners' donors	**Desirable to involve** Individual supporters; The Spiritans; 'Walk for Water' schools	**Essential to involve** Third World Groups; donors; Blackrock College; Media

Stakeholder's impact/influence on Aidlink

Analysis of Aidlink's current project support

A **Portfolio Analysis** was carried out to examine Aidlink's current portfolio of projects using the following matrix:

(1) Stars Strong projects or activities with real potential for growth: dynamic, popular and creative. Stars may become 'foundation stones' or become short-lived 'shooting starts'.	**(2) Question Marks** New or innovative projects, but not yet proven. They might become stars and move into Square 1. Alternatively, they may fail and move into Square 4. They need to be monitored closely.
(3) Foundation Stones Reliable, safe projects or activities that provide the NGO with a degree of financial security and/or credibility; they provide a solid base. They may start by being popular with funders but may become less attractive later as they are not seen as innovative.	**(4) Dead ducks** Take up management and financial resources and provide little or no added value for the effort required. Often organisations have problems dealing with such activities because they may be closely bound up with the organisation's earlier history.

During this exercise the following questions were considered:

1   How well-balanced is the portfolio (between, for example, creative but risk projects and stable projects);
2   How might each project move between boxes over the next year or so?
3   How could Aidlink's *'question marks'* be turned into *'stars'*? Would it be worth the investment of time, effort and other resources?
4   What should happen to the activities in Square 4 (eg: invest in them, hand them over, close them down)?
5   What are Aidlink's current plans for developing new areas of activity? Any NGO should be thinking about the future as well as the present.

Prioritisation Exercise:

The following exercise was helpful in bringing to light implicit priorities:

1   Three boxes to identify 3 piles, were put on the table - labelled A, B and C
2   Question 1: "*If revenue dropped by 50%, which projects would we stop doing first?*" Each person wrote down the programmes on a slip of paper and put them into box C.
3   Question 2: "*If revenue dropped by 75%, what would we stop doing*?" Each person should write down the programmes on a small piece of paper and put it into box B.
4   Question 3: "*What would you never stop doing*?" Each person should write down their response and put it into box A.

Each of the pieces of paper were removed from A, B and C and the results were discussed:
1   What is it clear that Aidlink should stop doing?
2   What is it clear that Aidlink should never stop doing?

There were lengthy discussions and final decisions were not agreed. However, the process was understood and these discussions can be continued in the face of changing circumstances.

Strategic Priorities

1. Expansion of Aidlink's funding base (restricted and unrestricted)

2. Strengthening the effectiveness of Aidlink to plan, manage and monitor its 2012-2015 strategy, through the development of a results-based management system

3. Strengthening the capacity of partners to strive to achieve the MDGs through the adoption of a rights framework and to build integration and coherence with development partners and stakeholders

4. Expansion of Aidlink's Development Education Programme 2012-2015

Strategic Goals and Objectives

1   Expansion of Aidlink's funding base (restricted and unrestricted)

Objective 1.1
To review the Fundraising Action Plan in line with the 2012-2015 Strategic Plan

Indicators
1.1.1   A clear fundraising plan for restricted income with identified institutional and other donors; dates; deadlines; responsibilities; levels of funding and co-financing expectations which is in line with the 2012-2015 strategy, by Jan 2013

1.1.1   A clear fundraising plan for unrestricted income in line with the requirements of the 2012-2015 Strategic Plan to meet a minimum of 20% of total budget ,by Dec 2013

Objective 1.2
To implement the 2012-2015 Fundraising Action Plan

Indicators
1.2.1   Identification of 2-3 institutional donors; the submission of   quality checked proposals, by Dec 2014

1.2.2   Identification of 10 Trusts/Foundations/CSR opportunities/philanthropic organisations and the submission of 10 quality-checked proposals, by Dec 2013

1.2.3   Identification of individual supporters and major donors to increase unrestricted income by a minimum of 20% of annual budget, by Dec 2013.

2   To strengthen the effectiveness of Aidlink to learn, plan, manage and monitor its organisational strategy through the development of a results-based management system

Objective 2.1
To implement the Aidlink governance policy to ensure a continuation of a committed functioning Board, including the identification and monitoring of risk, in line with national best practice – on-going, 2012-2015.

Indicators
2.1.1   A minimum of 6 Board meetings are held annually with a minimum of 75% of members in attendance; minutes are recorded and responsibilities carried out in line with Aidlink's Governance Policy.

2.1.2   Aidlink's self-assessment on adherence with the Dochas code of Corporate Governance (Dec 2013)

2.1.3   Transparency will be increased in the preparation of 2012 annual audited accounts, in line with the Irish Aid MoU benchmarks, and disclosure requirements will be followed on staff emoluments as set out in SORP paragraph 236, in 2012, and every year thereafter.

Objective 2.2
To manage, support and monitor the portfolio of partners and projects – on-going, 2012 – 2015, through the development of a results-based management system.

Indicators
 2.2.1   A Results Based Management system in line with Aidlink's Strategic Goals and Objectives (2012-2015); increased use of data collection tools, analysis methodologies and decision-making processes (Dec, 2013).

2.2.2   Monthly communication with all partners, or more frequently as required leads to strengthened contextual analysis through monitoring: partners' coherence with national and international frameworks; participation and ownership; management and organisation; financial sustainability; capacity awareness and training; technology issues; social, gender and cultural issues; environmental issues; external political and economic factors (Dec, 2013).

2.2.3   Monitoring progress of operational plans and expenditure against objectives an budget on a quarterly basis and coordinating financial allocations.

2.2.4   Sharing learning between partners through the dissemination of monitoring visit reports and evaluations of all partners.

2.2.5   Aidlink will clarify its capacity building approach to focus on a clear set of outcomes, and provide coaching and mentoring support to build capacity and respond to issues as they arise (ongoing).

2.2.6   A full baseline will be developed by the end of 2012, and Aidlink will develop, agree and finalise its Theory of Change and strengthen its programmatic approach by Dec 2013.

Objective 2.3
To strengthen the measurement of outcomes for learning, and articulate programme effectiveness. On-going, 2012-2015.

Indicators
2.3.1   Partners have baseline information in place, which is used as the basis for gathering information to analyse change on an annual basis.

2.3.2   Partners' capacity is strengthened to report outcomes, which can be directly contributed to their activities, by Dec 2013.

2.3.3   Research and learning opportunities are responded to as they arise, on-going, 2012-2015.

Objective 2.4
Revise roles, responsibilities and skills within Aidlink to respond to the requirements of the 2012-2015 Strategic Plan.

Indicators
2.4.1   Review the Aidlink Organogram, by Nov 2012.

2.4.2   Update Aidlink staff's Job Descriptions, by Dec 2012, in line with the Strategic Priorities.

2.4.3   Consider staff development needs and develop a staff development plan, Feb 2013.

3   To strengthen the capacity of partners to strive to achieve the MDGs through the adoption of a rights framework

Objective 3.1
To assess the capacity of partners to achieve their objectives through a rights framework.

Indicator
3.1.1   Develop an organisational capacity self-assessment tool and pilot it, by March 2013.

Objective 3.2
Develop a capacity building plan with each partner by, Dec 2013.

Indicators
3.2.1   Capacity building plan is developed and agreed with partners, it includes processes and dates for capacity building activities, by Dec 2013.

3.2.2   Partners feel more able to plan, monitor their activities using a rights framework, and to disseminate learning; their resource base is expanding, by Dec 2014.

4   Expansion of Aidlink's Development Education Programme, 2012-2015

Objective 4.1
To contribute to an increased understanding of poverty and inequity in Africa through development education, especially among young people.

Indicators
4.1.1   On-going participation in developmenteducation.ie, throughout 2012-2015.

4.1.2   Increased immersion opportunities will be taken up in an African environment, throughout 2012-2015.

4.1.3   Clarifications of outcomes (Obj 2.3) will increase quality of public engagement and development education, by Dec, 2013.

Objective 4.2
To increase the number of schools participating in the School Immersion Programme, 2012 – 2015

Indicator
4.2.1   An additional two schools, in the period 2013-2015, will be participating in the Schools Immersion Programme.

**Organisation Chart
(November, 2012)**

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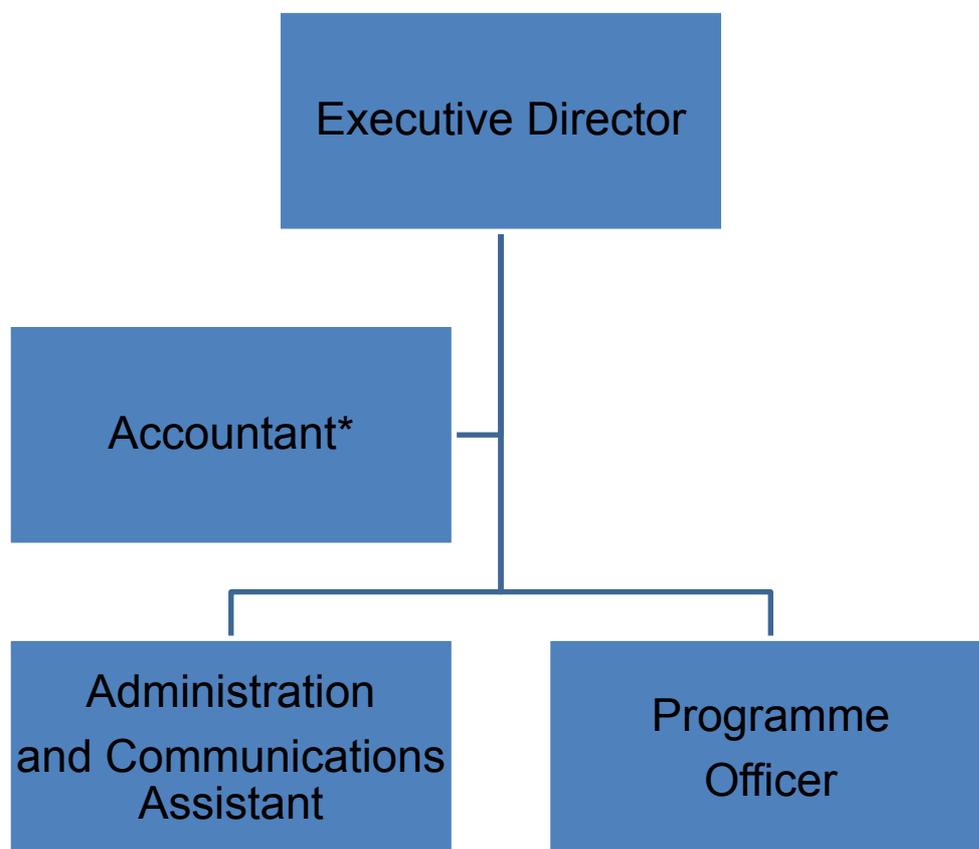
* Note – Accountant on retainer, not a full-time member of staff

Staff roles and responsibilities, summary:
Executive Director: strategy, policy, programme management, financial
management, fundraising and external communications

Accountant: financial management and advice, supervision of management account
systems, financial reporting to the Board

Programme Officer: programme planning and co-ordination, partner liaison, M&E and
institutional fundraising

Administration and Communications Assistant: office administration, book-keeping,
communication and fundraising support

APPENDIX 1

Participants who were consulted/involved in Aidlink's Strategic Planning

Aidlink Board Members

Mr. Clive Byrne, Chairperson

Mr. Kieran Cooney, Treasurer

Ms. Elaine Brennan, Secretary

Mr. Mick Dunne, Director

Ms. Paula McGovern, Director

Fr. Gerard O'Connor C.S.sR., Director

Dr. Philip Owende, Director

Dr. Stephen Ranalow, Director

Ms. Mary Scully, Director

Mr. Martin Tormey, Director

Aidlink Staff

Anne Cleary, Executive Director

Fran Wallace, Programme Officer

Zoë Liston, Administration & Communications Assistant

Myles O'Grady, Accountant

Overseas partner organisations

Caritas MADDO

EMESCO

VAD

The Diocese of Lodwar

The Girl Child Network

The Spiritans Province of Ghana

APPENDIX 2

Portfolio Analysis - Findings

(1) Stars	(2) Question Marks
Agriculture Project – Diocese of Lodwar 2nd Chance Education – Diocese of Lodwar Immersion Programme	GCN – Capacity Building project PHC – Diocese of Lodwar Agriculture Project – VAD Agriculture Project – EMESCO CEHEWA – MADDO Education – MADDO
(3) Foundation Stones SSIP – GCN WATSAN – VAD WATSAN-Health - EMESCO	**(4) Dead ducks** Education – The Spiritans

During the exercise the following questions were considered:

1. How well-balanced is the portfolio (between, for example, creative but risk projects and stable projects);
2. How might each service or project move between boxes over the next year or so?
3. How could your 'question marks' be turned into 'stars'? Would it be worth the investment of time, effort and other resources?
4. What should happen to the activities in Square 4 (eg: invest in them, hand them over, float them off, close them down)?
5. What are your NGO's current plans for developing new areas of activity? Any NGO should be thinking about the future as well as the present.

Prioritisation Exercise - findings:

1. The following exercise was helpful in bringing to light implicit priorities: Three boxes to identify 3 piles, were put on the table - labelled A, B and C

   Each of the pieces of paper were removed from A, B and C and the results were discussed:
   1. What is it clear that Aidlink should stop doing?
   2. What is it clear that Aidlink should never stop doing?

   Findings can be found under each question, below:

2. Question 1: "*If revenue dropped by 50%, which projects would we stop doing first?*" Each person wrote down the programmes on a slip of paper and put them into box C.

       Education – The Spiritans (Ghana) – 100%

       Education – MADDO (Uganda)   }
       Agriculture – VAD (Uganda)   } 66%
       Agriculture – EMESCO (Uganda)   }

       Participants were all aware that, faced with such decisions, they would consider all opportunities open to them, eg:
   - *collaboration with others*
   - *consideration of potential merger opportunities*
   - *consideration of partner(s) transfer(s)*

3. Question 2: "*If revenue dropped by 75%, what would we stop doing*?" Each person should write down the programmes on a small piece of paper and put it into box B.

       Education – The Spiritans (Ghana) – 100%

       Kenya Programme (66%)
       Uganda Programme (34%)

4. Question 3: "*What would you never stop doing*?" Each person should write down their response and put it into box A.

       SSIP – GCN   }
       Agriculture – Diocese of Lodwar   } 100%

       It was agreed that the following approaches/themes would not be at risk:

       Partnership
       WATSAN
       Gender
       Poverty reduction

Worst-case scenario thinking:

Failure to raise core costs - response:

- *Consider carefully the transition process with the Board*
- *Consider options:*
  - *Analysis of core costs*
  - *Working from home*
- *Re-allocation of committed/restricted funding (in consultation with donors)*
- *Agree with the Board the point of no return (merger inevitable)*