

Welcome Sierra Leone, Welcome Myanmar

Two new countries represented in Fellowship awards



2014-15 Fellowship Training Programme awardees from Sierra Leone, Jeelo Kainwo (left) and Zainab Mansaray.



L-R: Harriet Sexton-Morel and Michael Lonergan of Irish Aid welcome Nawsan Jangma from Myanmar as the first Metta Fellowship awardee.

Warm welcomes have been extended by Irish Aid to students from two new fellowship award countries - Sierra Leone and Myanmar.

Sierra Leone became eligible under the Irish Aid Fellowship Training Programme for 2014-15 and two fellows commenced Master's programmes in Ireland in September in the areas of International Criminal Law and Sustainable Development.

In addition, the Metta Fellowship for Myanmar got underway with an awardee commencing a Master's programme at Kimmage Development Studies Centre.

Across all Irish Aid fellowship strands, a total of 74 awards were made for study in Ireland, with an additional 31 regional fellowships allocated.

We wish all awardees good luck with their studies!

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Zambian cooking stick has special place in Ireland

Each year, new fellows arrive while others depart but Zambian students have built a tradition over several years that brings continuity alongside the changes.



Outgoing 2012-13 fellow Sibeso Kahanda (third from right) passes on the cooking stick to incoming fellow Lincoln Himaambo Mungaila, who held it on behalf of the 2013-14 year group from Zambia, also pictured.

Back in 2009, Brother Stephen Phiri came to Ireland with a traditional wooden cooking stick, used in Zambia to make “nshima”, a thick porridge served during lunch or dinner. Instead of the stick leaving Ireland with him, it remains to this day, a symbol of continuity passed on each year to a new incoming fellow. **»The Link** spoke to some of those who've carried forward the tradition...

Lincoln Mungaila, the most recent alumni to pass on the cooking stick, explains: “The purpose for passing it on to the next student is meant to signify our Zambian spirit of living as one family. Every time I used the stick in the kitchen, I could feel more responsible about upholding the Zambian culture and also learning more from others.”

Sibeso Kahanda from the 2012-13 group, gives another perspective: “There were times when the pressure of what was required of me in school could be hectic and consequently stress

me. In those moments, I doubted my ability to make it through. So having the cooking stick became a symbol of hope and continuity for me. It gave me the impetus to push on because I wanted to be able to hand it over to the next person after completing my course successfully. Also, being able to prepare traditional food in a faraway country helped me feel close to home during those few times when I was homesick,”

George Chileya, from the 2011-12 group, was one of three Zambian fellows living in Goldsmith Hall at Trinity College Dublin. He says: “In the Zambian sense, if a visitor is not served with nshima, any other meal will not be appreciated. We used the stick always and very much. I felt honoured to have used it. When handing it on it symbolised my graduation and exit from Ireland.”

Sibeso reflects: “The cooking stick became part of my possessions and I attached sentimental value to it. Letting go of it at the end of my programme felt like leaving



George Chileya cooking ‘nshima’ in Goldsmith Hall at TCD in 2012 for a meal shared with two other Zambian fellows.

something that belonged to me in Ireland. However, I knew that it might be of help to a colleague just as it had been to me.”

In September 2014, and for the first time, the cooking stick left Dublin with an incoming student, destined for Cork. Esther Ng’ambi, studying at UCC, says the stick “symbolises preparation of meals to nourish the body and satisfy hunger. In this case, hunger for information and hunger for learning. I have learnt so much and I will gladly pass it on to whoever the next person will be.”

Irish Aid Volunteering Initiative



Harriet Sexton-Morel, Irish Aid

International volunteering lies at the very heart of development cooperation. It is based on a sense of solidarity with fellow global citizens for whom poverty is a daily reality. Volunteering contributes in a very tangible way to that goal by connecting and empowering people, releasing potential, building futures and contributing to mutual learning.

Launched in October 2013, the Volunteering Initiative aims to enhance the quality of international volunteering from Ireland, building on the experience of the Irish Aid programme to date. It arose out of a commitment in Ireland's International Development Policy OneWorld, One Future launched in May 2013. The commitment was made in recognition of the rich legacy of overseas volunteering amongst Irish people and their solidarity with those in greatest need.

The Initiative will strengthen support for volunteering and promote civilian participation in high quality volunteer programmes that contribute to the achievement of clear sustainable development results. These provide an opportunity for skill sharing and mutual learning which contributes to sustainable development and reinforces solidarity between citizens in Ireland and developing countries.

Key elements to the initiative include:

- Strengthening of the current focus on quality volunteering, in cooperation with Comhlámh (the Irish Association of Development Workers) through provision of training and information for volunteers and monitoring of the implementation of the Code of Good Practice on Volunteering;
- Better matching of volunteers to opportunities through volunteer fairs and volunteer events and the development of enhanced information about volunteering on social media, including #VolOps to enable sending agencies promote volunteering opportunities and for prospective volunteers to register their interest;



#VolOps - Minister of State for Development, Trade Promotion and North South Co-operation, Séan Sherlock, with staff at the Irish Aid Volunteering Fair, October 2014.

- A new pilot volunteering programme with Voluntary Service Overseas Ireland (VSO) linked to Ireland's key partner countries which facilitates sending skilled volunteers to share their skills and experience in sub-Saharan Africa;
- A continued focus on volunteering which will support innovative NGO volunteer programmes such as the Civil Society Fund which provides annual and multi-annual grants for small to medium sized projects undertaken by Irish NGOs in the developing world;
- Strengthened partnership with the UN Volunteer Programme – continued funding the UN Youth Volunteer Programme (UNV internship programme) to support 10-15 Irish interns to work with the UN in developing countries annually;
- Promotion of online volunteering – funding the UN Volunteer programme to host an on-line volunteering facility. This very successful programme facilitates online volunteering by some 10,000 volunteers globally each year;
- Actively working with our EU partners on a new regulation for the establishment of a new European voluntary humanitarian Aid Corps to be known as EU Aid Volunteers which was launched in January 2015;
- Profiling the experience and contribution of volunteers to the achievement of development results in order to raise awareness of volunteering.

For further information, please check out our website: www.irishaid.ie/volunteering

Staying connected: Truong Tuyet (Vietnam)

»The Link spoke to Tuyet just over three years after she left Ireland with an MSc (Agr) in Environmental Resource Management from UCD.

When I got the fellowship in 2010, I was working at Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry as a lecturer while participating in some projects on poverty reduction and environmental management at the Agricultural and Forestry Research and Development Centre for the Northern Mountain Region.

I chose the course at UCD to improve my knowledge of environmental management and I'm very proud that I did. It has provided me with a wide range of skills to tackle any research problems. I learnt how to manage my time and get the best result from the scheduling. What is important, besides knowledge, is critical thinking where I am led to seeing connections of issues and becoming more systematic.

Back in Vietnam at the end of 2011, I resumed my work as a lecturer at TUAF and have enjoyed the confidence that the Master's degree has given me. I can share my knowledge, my experience and all of my passion for the subject with my students.

My thesis has been published in a Vietnamese journal and it has also passed the initial screening for an international journal. I'm waiting for feedback from the reviewers. I have also worked on seven other articles since my return.

In 2014, I got the first prize for part of my thesis when taking part in a National Youth Science and Technology Conference of Universities and Colleges of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. I have also been awarded in a teaching methodology competition at my university. It has been very exciting to me to be able to focus on teaching and researching, and I feel that I'm going the right way and am doing my best to contribute to my country and to help my students.

I have just begun studying for a PhD in Australia on the impact of climate change on biodiversity in the Northern Mountain Region of Vietnam, for which I received an Australia Awards scholarship. After finishing, I want to go back to my country to continue my job, being a better teacher and a researcher. I hope to develop a network of researchers on climate change and biodiversity in the Northern Mountain Region. Right now, in Vietnam and especially in the



region, there is a lack of scientists and researchers in this area and I'd like my research to help push it up.

When I first came to Ireland I was a bit worried about whether I would have ever get used to it, but from the first day the Irish people were so warm to make me feel at home. It is a strong memory in my mind. Language was the other big adjustment. People speak too fast! Sometimes, when I went to class, I felt left behind because I couldn't understand the lectures or the assignments. The study methods were also challenges for me to overcome at first. Everything was new for the first semester, but afterwards I felt much more confident.

Irish memories will remain in me as the joyful moments: a pint of Guinness and listening to traditional music, which is just really beautiful. I wish I could enjoy a pint of Guinness there again! I really loved the special green and peaceful parts of Ireland with the sheep grazing on pasture and long stone walls, and brilliant natural landscapes of Ireland such as The Burren and The Cliffs of Moher. A part of my heart will always be there, which is why still I am thinking of Ireland even now I'm in Australia.

Uganda Irish Alumni Association

2014 saw the formal launch of the Uganda Irish Alumni Association (UIAA). Their first AGM was held on 21st June, during which an executive committee was elected to drive the alumni group development over the next two years. Within a short time the group has made great strides – it already has 200 members and held an orientation session for departing Irish Aid Fellows, where they shared wisdom from their past experience and tips for life in Ireland.

“As Uganda Irish Alumni members we have been able to come together, get to know each other and network and support each other in a mutually beneficial partnership” says Association President Henry Tumwebaze.

The UIAA has received great support from the Irish Embassy in Uganda as well as the Irish Society in Uganda. They are also working closely with Irish NGOs and companies based in Uganda as well as alumni groups of individual universities. The association aims to encourage alumni members to work together to use their diverse skills and training to create change in their own communities. It also endeavours to provide a platform for networking between alumni members and also guarantee their continued engagement with the Embassy and Irish Aid.

“We are in the process of finalising our strategic plan which is aligned along the thematic areas of the MDGs in consideration of both Uganda and Irish Aid development agendas” explains Executive Secretary Josephine Kafeero Nabaggala.



Executive committee members of the Uganda Irish Alumni Association after being elected at the first UIAA AGM. From the left is Ambassador of Ireland to Uganda Dónal Cronin, UIAA President Henry Tumwebaze, Vice President Lillian Mworeka, Executive Secretary Josephine Kafeero Nabaggala, Committee Member Norman Ajiri, Committee Member Sharon Ahumuza, Legal Counsel David Baxter Mutekanga Bakibinga and Treasurer Harriet Lisa Acen.

The Association has many plans for 2015, aside from fundraising and network building; they plan to give back to their own communities through a variety of community development projects. One exciting project is a ‘Go Green’ campaign which will involve tree planting and environmental awareness-raising in Central and Eastern Uganda which have been badly hit by flooding in recent years. They plan to plant at least 50,000 trees in Katakwi and Nakaseke districts for the purpose of environmental conservation and a potential income source in 10 years’ time.

An education project is planned for the Karamoja region, where the UIAA will source school books and educational materials for local schools which have been supported by Irish Aid projects.

There are also plans for an education fair, to introduce Ugandan educators to the

Irish education system and opportunities.

We asked the UIAA President if he had any advice for other alumni groups trying to get started: “It takes courage and volunteerism to spearhead and mobilize each other to form a functioning and growing alumni association. We are always busy with our business schedules when called upon for Irish Alumni meetings and events but you always remember when you had not got a scholarship how you were feeling. Developing such strong and robust alumni associations especially in Africa is one way of showing Irish Aid that we are tackling development sustainably and that more seeds can be sown here to bear fruits for next generations.”

If you are based in Uganda and you would like to join the UIAA you should contact the Fellowship Administrator in the Irish Embassy.

Long-time fellowship supporter to retire

Dr John Fry is retiring from UCD after being the Course Director of the MSc (Agr.) in Environmental Resource Management for the last 24 years. A long-time supporter of the Irish Aid Fellowship Programme, he will be greatly missed. We caught up with him to reflect on his career and hear about his plans for the future.

Dr Fry has been a lecturer and key figure within UCD's School of Agriculture and Food Science for thirty-nine years. He will be a familiar face not just to graduates of the Master's in Environmental Resource Management (known as MERMS) but also to many other fellows who have attended ICOS social functions down the years.

Educated in the UK, Dr Fry describes his path into the agricultural sciences as not being an instinctual one: "At secondary school, I was dissuaded from Arts into Sciences - I think that was school pressure simply to bolster their science numbers, but it was probably a good long-term idea."

After completing a degree in biology at the University of York in northern England, he says he was "dithering between possible research in either animal behaviour or photosynthesis", opting for the latter when a PhD scholarship offer came along. "The topic was seasonal control of photosynthesis (i.e. stress physiology), and it could have been on any plant species, but the funding was for work on conifers. So after working with Sitka spruce for 3 years (and having the scars to prove it), I can call myself a forester if I want."

While doing his PhD at the University of Exeter, John became involved in many extra-curricular activities and developed his

interest in folk music and Morris dancing. Still a folk music fan, his record collection now amounts to some 12,000 items and has resulted in the 'ERM Songbook' that he gives to his students.

"The UCD job (in what was then Agricultural Botany) was one of a batch of 4 university jobs advertised immediately after I had finished my PhD. Small group teaching is an incredibly rewarding situation and I was hooked. It works even better with more mature students such as MSc Agriculture in Environmental Resource Management students. I have always been lucky with the students I have encountered, and I always think I've learned from them at least as much as I've communicated."

The MSc (Agr) in Environmental Resource Management started in 1990. It is a valuable programme providing expertise in sustainable environmental management to students from a variety of backgrounds: agricultural managers to architects to economists. Dozens of Irish Aid Fellows have studied the course over the years. The programme has always been welcoming and accommodating to IA Fellows, the course structure was even altered to ensure sufficient time for Fellows to conduct home based research.

But the benefits flow both ways, as Dr Fry notes: "The Irish Aid Fellows have been of enormous



Dr Fry with ICOS Director Sheila Power at the ICOS Christmas Reception 2014.

significance to the programme's other participants, helping to expand the horizons of the Irish students."

Dr Fry will continue working at UCD though 2015. After that, or possibly in tandem, he is considering some environmental consultancy work. Professional plans aside, Dr Fry has plenty ideas as to how he will enjoy his retirement: "Were I to feel at a loose end, I have it in the back of my head to get involved in charity shop work - both as a general dogsbody, and to contribute my specialist knowledge of second-hand books and records. However, I have at least one serious article on folk music history in my head to get onto paper and published."

"Apart from that", he adds, "I have about 40 offers of accommodation around the world from former MERMS and other students, so we may plan a few trips."

College Spotlight: Trinity College Dublin

» [The Link](#) looks at the history of Ireland's oldest university



TRINITY
COLLEGE
DUBLIN

Ireland's oldest university, Trinity College Dublin is steeped with history and a premier stop on the city's tourist trail. Aside from buildings of great historical significance, Trinity is currently home to the famous Book of Kells along with the 1916 Proclamation of the Irish Republic.

Although it is at the heart of modern Dublin, when it was founded in 1592 Trinity lay outside the boundaries of the then small walled city. It was established by the British during a period of imperialist rule and protestant reformation, and for two centuries Trinity was an exclusively protestant college. Catholics were not formally admitted until 1793; women not until 1904.

With roughly 17,000 students Trinity College is now a world leader in Nanotechnology, Information Technology, Immunology, Mathematics, Engineering, Psychology, Politics and English. Trinity College is currently home to the Innovation Academy and the Science Gallery which features cutting-edge interactive exhibitions, which are a popular attraction for tourists and locals alike.

Trinity boasts the largest library in Ireland with over 6 million printed volumes documenting 400 years of academic development. The most famous piece in the Trinity collection is the Book of Kells which resides in the Old Library Long Room. The Long Room also hosts an original copy of the 1916 Proclamation of the Irish Republic. Trinity is a buzzing hive of not



Long Room, TCD - Photo: Nic McPhee.

only academic activity but also social. It has over 120 student societies and 50 sports clubs.

Irish Aid Fellows in the past have studied a large variety of courses at Trinity, but the most popular remain the MSc in Global Health, the Masters in Education and the MPhil in International Peace Studies.



Science Gallery, Trinity College Dublin.

Irish Embassy in South Africa sends off 2014 Kader Asmal fellows



Mrs Louise Asmal and Ambassador Ngwevula – Diplomatic Academy, Department of International Relations and Cooperation along with Mr Tony McCullagh - Deputy Head of Mission, Mr Bob Patterson - Head of Development, 2014 Kader Asmal fellows and others at the 2014 fellows send-off reception.

The first full cohort of 10 Kader Asmal fellows commenced their studies in Ireland in September 2014.

The fellows are undertaking Master's studies across a range of disciplines including Management, Food Science, Agriculture and Rural Development, Social Policy, Development and Human Rights Law.

The Deputy Head of Mission, Mr Tony McCullagh together with Mrs Louise Asmal co-hosted the send-off reception for the fellows at the Residence of the Ambassador on 26 August 2014. The reception was attended by members of Kader Asmal Advisory

Council, representing Business Ireland South Africa, Department of International Relations and Cooperation, Department of Higher Education and Training, Council for the Advancement of South African Constitution and staff from the Embassy.

South Africa is pleased to have met the target set for the 2014-15 intake. In 2013-14, South Africa participated in the fellowship programme on a pilot basis. The two fellowship awardees successfully completed their studies and returned to their respective jobs with AIDS Foundation and Gender Links, two of Irish Aid's partner organisations.

» **The Link** is published by ICOS on behalf of Irish Aid.

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