

## FELLOWS MEET MINISTER OF STATE CIARAN CANNON, T.D.



Minister of State for the Diaspora and Overseas Development, Ciaran Cannon, T.D., with 2017/18 Irish Aid Fellowship Recipients at the Fellowship Seminar Day event at Iveagh House in Dublin

On Monday April 16, Minister of State for the Diaspora and Overseas Development, Ciaran Cannon T.D., Irish Aid Africa Director, Fionnuala Gilsenan, and Deputy Director and Head of Fellowships, Ciara de Mora, welcomed this year's fellows to the 2018 Fellowship Seminar Day at Iveagh House, the headquarters

of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in Dublin. Addressing fellows, Minister Cannon spoke of the 44-year history of the fellowships programmes and the importance of education in any country's development experience. The full text of his speech is available on the Fellowships website. Following

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his speech, Minister Cannon engaged with fellows through a question and answer session.

Four of this year's fellows also made presentations speaking about their research and their experiences while studying in Ireland. Our four speakers were Nyasha Sanie (Zimbabwe), Siyabonga Reginald Mathebula (South Africa), Khaing Min Thant (Myanmar) and Nguyen Thi Quynh Trang (Vietnam).

This was the last event at which all of the 2017/18 fellows will be together with the fellowships team at Irish Aid and ICOS. We wish all 2017/18 fellows the best of luck in their exams and dissertations in the weeks ahead, and look forward to maintaining connections into the future after they return to their home countries in the coming months.



Minister Cannon and Irish Aid Africa Director, Fionnuala Gilsean, listening to fellows' contributions



Nyasha Sanie from Zimbabwe addressing the 2018 Fellowship Seminar Day at Iveagh House



Some Kader Asmal fellows from South Africa with representatives of Irish Aid and ICOS



Some of the fellows from Vietnam enjoying the 2018 Fellowship Seminar Day at Iveagh House



Lenin Chisaira (Zimbabwe) and Catherine Kahubire (Uganda) enjoying the 2018 Fellowship Seminar Day

# Introducing the new Palestine Scholarship Programme

Over the past 30 years, twenty-four students from Palestine have come to Ireland to study under the Irish Aid Fellowship Training Programme.

In January, Tánaiste (Deputy Prime Minister) and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Simon Coveney, T.D., announced that Ireland is to significantly increase the number of scholarships offered to Palestinian students over the next five years, which will be done through the establishment of a dedicated scholarship programme.

The Tánaiste announced an immediate increase of €200,000 in 2018 funding available for Palestinian students seeking third level and professional training opportunities in Ireland.

The Tánaiste indicated that the Government intends to provide significant further increases in scholarship funding for Palestinian students over the 2019-2022 period.

“For the first time, funding is being ring-fenced to create further opportunities for Palestinian students to undertake Masters levels courses in our Higher Education Institutes in Ireland. This is a first step towards a large-scale scholarship programme for Palestinian students, to be expanded over the next five years. Ireland has long been a strong supporter of the development of modern and quality education for all Palestinians in conjunction with our partners, the Palestinian Authority and UNRWA, and this scholarship programme will be a further tangible expression of that support.”

The Palestine Scholarship Programme will focus on courses which will enhance labour market skills in areas where there are identified deficits. The programme will be accessible to groups across Palestinian society; enhancing opportunities for women and providing opportunities to other previously under-represented groups.

Palestinian Minister for Education and Higher Education, Sabri Saidam, welcomed the announcement.

“Ireland has today consolidated its support to the Palestinian people in their march towards improving the quality of education and realising the vision of the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education which aims to create a knowledge productive Palestine capable of producing a sustainable economy.”

For 2018/19, three students will come to Ireland to study under the new programme. They will study on courses in Dublin Institute of Technology and University of Limerick in international and peace studies, and sustainable development.



Maha Abdallah, 2016 FTP fellow from Palestine,  
at her graduation day in NUI Galway



Sibongile in 2006 with then Minister for Overseas Development and Human Rights, Conor Lenihan

# Staying Connected: Sibongile Mtungwa

>>**The Link spoke with Sibongile Mtungwa from South Africa, who came to Ireland on the Fellowship Training Programme in 2005. She studied Development Studies at Kimmage Development Studies Centre, and returned to South Africa to become Director of the Women's Leadership and Training Programme.**

It has been 12 years since Sibongile completed her studies under the Irish Aid Fellowship Programme and, to this day, she still regularly recalls the wonderful experience she had in Ireland.

Born and raised in a small rural community in the Southern African province of kwaZulu Natal, Sibongile did not really see herself diverging away from her community's traditional path for women of marriage and raising a family. That was until she discovered the Women's Leadership and Training Programme (WLTP), an initiative dedicated to inspiring women and young girls to help them realise their potential, and to challenge gender stereotypes.

After initially attending WLTP workshops and joining a number of women's activist groups, Sibongile would later go on to work at the WLTP and achieve a Diploma in Development Studies through a programme called Training for Transformation (TFT).

"At Training for Transformation I studied my diploma with development workers from all over the world. TFT had a partnership with the Kimmage

Development Studies Centre, and this is how the opportunity to study a BA in Development Studies came about," explains Sibongile.

However, living in a community where women were not always treated as equals meant that Sibongile would face adversity in her bid to take up her fellowship award. Fueled by the desire to be a leader within her community, and the determination to further her own knowledge of development, Sibongile applied to the Fellowship Training Programme and was accepted to study on the BA in Development Studies at the Kimmage Development Studies Centre (KDSC).

The prospect of studying in Ireland would not only be a dream come true for Sibongile, but also for her grandmother, as she explains: "My grandmother was a key role player in my education. Although she didn't finish school, she saw the importance of education and always encouraged us."

Arriving to Ireland in August 2006, Sibongile describes her experience: "Life in Ireland was generally very good. I enjoyed the safe streets; travelling at night

without have to fear people. I enjoyed the pubs, even though I don't take alcohol. I enjoyed visiting with friends to places like Limerick, Belfast and Galway."

However, aside from having to deal with the cold Irish weather, being from a rural community meant that Sibongle sometimes found it challenging interacting with strangers who were not always the most welcoming to her friendly demeanour. "It was sometimes not easy to get into a bus and find silence. One gets in and greets people, but it took me a long time to understand that coming from a rural area is not like being in an area full of people from different cultures."

At KDSC, Sibongile studied diverse topics from gender development to financial management, and enhanced her knowledge of global development issues relating to Africa and the rest of the world. She met wonderful and interesting people in her class and amongst the academic staff, holding particularly fond memories of her tutor, Paddy Reilly. Sibongle feels that she still has a special connection with Ireland: "Every time something comes up about Ireland, my face

lights and shines and my heart melts. I know something is special there for me because I have been to a number of places now, but my heart still remembers Ireland in a special way."

Before departing South Africa to take up her fellowship award, Sibongile had worked as project coordinator at the WLTP. Following completion of her course, she returned home to take up the then recently vacated position of director in the same organisation, while also spending some time working on an inter-governmental project between Lesotho and South Africa as a community development specialist. If it were not for the

Fellowship Training Programme, Sibongile believes that neither of these opportunities would have presented themselves to her.

Since assuming the role of director, Sibongile has applied the knowledge gained from her Development Studies course to improve WLTP's programmes and to build capacity in the organisation. Sibongile's deeper understanding of gender issues helped her to develop a campaign strategy against female abductions in the province of kwaZulu Natal, a custom commonly practised amongst the men of the region, particularly in the cases of proposed marriages. WLTP consulted community

groups to try to educate and change perceptions around this tradition which has been so damaging to both women and girls.

Sibongile is currently doing an MA in Maynooth by distance learning, and hopes that she may continue to serve as an example for the women of her community, and that they may be encouraged to invest in their own education. At a national level, Sibongile hopes that South Africa can move towards being a more fair society, with equal opportunities for both boys and girls, men and women.

*Sibongile was interviewed in July 2018.*

## Alumni Activity



*Alumni of the Michael Courtney Fellowship for Burundi met with Ambassador Paul Sherlock on July 2.*

*On July 21, the Uganda Irish Alumni Association held their Annual General Meeting and elected a new executive committee.*



# Kimmage DSC moves to Maynooth University

Kimmage Development Studies Centre (KDSC) was established in 1974 and, since the early 1990s, more than 180 Irish Aid Fellows have completed courses there in international development studies.



Kimmage Manor at Kimmage DSC

From September 2018, however, courses will no longer be offered from the campus in Kimmage, Dublin. Following a merger, all staff and students will now be based in Maynooth University in Kildare, just outside Dublin.

On June 22, Sheila and Derrie from ICOS attended KDSC's "Grand Farewell" party, at which there were alumni from as far back as the 1980s all wanting to say goodbye. We wish all the staff and students all the best in their new home!

## Teachers Making a Difference in Uganda travel to Ireland

In the last issue of [">>The Link](#), we featured the Teachers Making a Difference programme in Uganda, which recognises innovative and inspiring teachers, and which is sponsored by the Embassy of Ireland in Kampala.

On January 27, 2018, the top five teachers, together with a journalist from New Vision and the Irish Aid Education Advisor, were flagged off for the week-long visit to Ireland.

While in Ireland, the teachers met with Minister of Education and Skills, Richard Bruton, Irish Aid Director General, Ruairí de Burca, Irish Ambassador to Uganda, Finbar O'Brien, together with staff of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The teachers also interacted with

their Irish counterparts at Froebel Primary Teacher Education College, Maynooth University, St. Patrick's Boys School and Trinity Comprehensive Ballymun School. In the different institutions, the visiting teachers learnt about the importance of teacher training in Ireland and the motivations and challenges of teachers. They also witnessed and experienced the application of practical interactive and child centred teaching.

It wasn't all work as the teachers also had a chance to visit different tourist sites around Dublin including the National Gallery, Leinster House, St Stephen's Green and the famous Ha'Penny Bridge.

During the feedback session at the end of the visit, Martin Kananura, a teacher from Mbarara

district said, "Since I was in constant communication with my colleagues back home throughout the visit and sharing what I was learning with them, they said that, it wasn't only me that benefited from the visit but the school teaching staff as a whole."

*This is an edited version of the original article available on the [Embassy of Ireland, Uganda website](#).*



# COLLEGE SPOTLIGHT:



The Courtyard at Cork Institute of Technology's main campus at Bishopstown, Cork

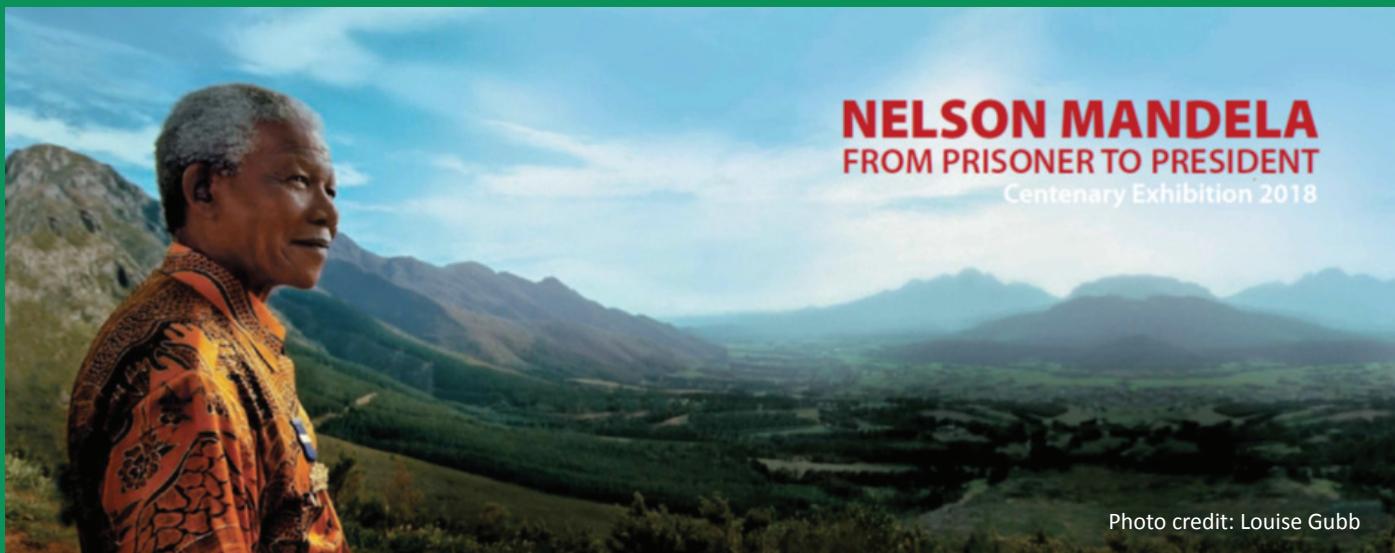
Cork Institute of Technology (CIT) participated in the Fellowship programme for the first time this year, and five fellows from Vietnam are currently studying there in areas such as public relations and media, business, and human resources. A master of engineering course is also open to fellows for next year's entry.

With its main campus based in Bishopstown, close to Cork city centre, and another three campuses around Cork, CIT has approximately 12,000 registered students. This includes 1,000 international students from 125 different countries.

The Institute boasts many top class facilities, including its award-winning Library & IT Building, as well as its world class laboratories.

It also features many clubs and students societies, and excellent recreation facilities that include a championship standard running track, tennis courts, an all-weather pitch and a gymnasium.

Based on the experience of fellows currently studying there, we expect fellows to continue studying at CIT well into the future under the fellowships programme.



# Nelson Mandela Exhibition Opens in Dublin

This year marks the centenary of Nelson Mandela's birth and the twenty-fifth anniversary of diplomatic relations between Ireland and South Africa. To commemorate both occasions, the Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade worked in partnership with the Apartheid Museum in South Africa and the Office of Public Works to bring *From Prisoner to President: Nelson Mandela Centenary Exhibition* to Kilmainham Gaol in Dublin.

The exhibition, which was opened on July 12 by President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins, highlights the strength and breadth of Ireland's relationship with South Africa, from Ireland's support for the anti-apartheid movement, through to the vibrant and multifaceted partnership which exists between Ireland and South Africa today.

During his opening speech, the President noted the symbolism attached to holding "an exhibition celebrating the life of one of the greatest champions of human freedom, dignity and equality of

the past century" in Kilmainham Goal.

"This place of incarceration and execution for so many of those who fought for Irish freedom, is a symbol not only of defiance and courage but of profound sacrifice, made not for any small or partial version of nationalism but for a generous vision of an enlarged freedom capable of encompassing

all those seeking liberty and self-determination."

He concluded with the hope that the exhibition "will be an inspiration, and a summons to recover the idealism, courage, and forgiveness too, that Nelson Mandela evoked in himself and in others throughout his remarkable life."



President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins, opens the Nelson Mandela Exhibition in Kilmainham Gaol, Dublin



**Irish Aid**

Ríaltas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland

# *“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”*

- Nelson Mandela

In order to bring Mandela's remarkable story to a museum audience and to convey something of the epic quality of his life, the Apartheid Museum produced the exhibition “Mandela – Leader, Comrade, Negotiator, Prisoner, Statesman” in 2008 as part of the celebration of Nelson Mandela's 90th birthday. It opened at the Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg and was later moved to its permanent location at the Nelson Mandela Museum in Mthatha, South Africa. Variations of the exhibition have been travelling around the world ever since including to Argentina, Ecuador, France, Luxembourg, Peru, USA and now Ireland.

The exhibition explores Mandela's extraordinary life through five themes – Leader, Comrade, Negotiator, Prisoner, and Statesman. In each theme, the narrative is presented through evocative large scale images and text, supported by films, photographs and displays of original artefacts. It will run until 12 January 2019 and will be accessible to the public free of charge. Advance ticket booking is recommended, and is available through the following link: <http://kilmainhamgaol.admit-one.eu/>



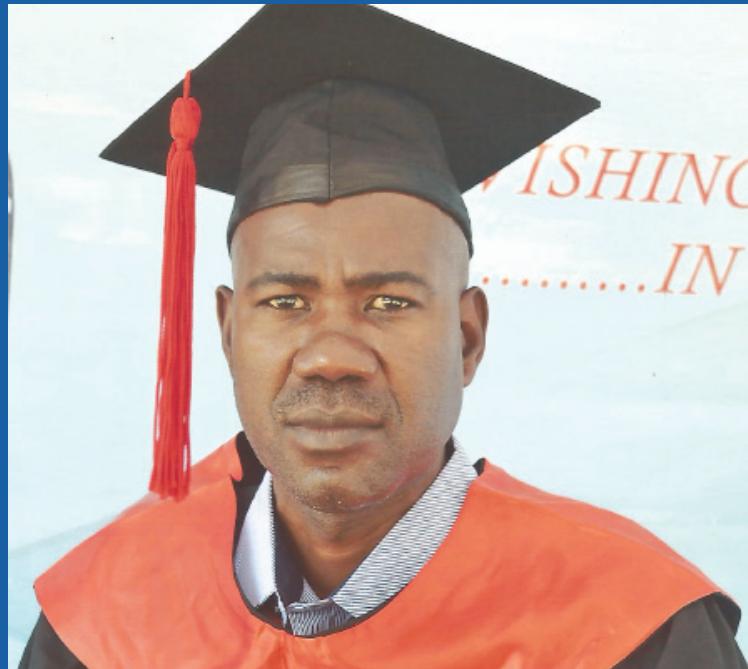
The entrance to the museum at Kilmainham Gaol where the Nelson Mandela Exhibition will be hosted until January 2019



President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins, poses with a photograph of Nelson Mandela at the launch of the exhibition in Kilmainham Gaol

# RECENT GRADUATIONS

Here is a selection of photographs sent to us by fellowship alumni who recently graduated from their programmes and who were able to attend their graduation ceremonies. Congratulations to all recent graduates!



Felix Lyope Lubuga (Tanzania),  
Mzumbe University



Beatrice Kampire (Uganda),  
Uganda Martyrs University



Samwel Korinja Olekao (Tanzania),  
Sokoine University of Agriculture

Is there anything that you would like to share in the next issue of >>The Link? Get in touch at:

[alumni@icosirl.ie](mailto:alumni@icosirl.ie)