

# DÁIL ÉIREANN

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## AN COMHCHOISTE UM GHNÓTHAÍ EACHTRACHA AGUS TRÁDÁIL

### JOINT COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE

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*Dé Céadaoin, 2 Nollaig 2015*

*Wednesday, 2 December 2015*

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The Joint Committee met at 10 a.m.

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#### MEMBERS PRESENT:

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| Deputy Eric Byrne,         | Senator Michael Mullins. |
| Deputy Seán Crowe,         |                          |
| Deputy Olivia Mitchell,    |                          |
| Deputy Dan Neville,        |                          |
| Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan, |                          |
| Deputy Ruairí Quinn,       |                          |

In attendance: Deputy Gabrielle McFadden and Senator Martin Conway.

DEPUTY PAT BREEN IN THE CHAIR.

## BUSINESS OF JOINT COMMITTEE

### **Business of Joint Committee**

**Chairman:** Senator Daly has submitted a motion for today's meeting. He is due to attend but he said Deputy Crowe would move the motion for him. As Deputy Crowe is not present either I propose that we postpone discussion of the motion until next week. Is that agreed? Agreed.

### **Sustainable Development Goals and Disability Issues**

**Chairman:** I welcome everybody to this morning's meeting. Some members have been detained with other business and are due to arrive shortly. We already have three members present. I extend a very warm welcome to Ms Sarah O'Toole, Mr. Lars Bosselmann and Dr. Mary Keogh of Christian Blind Missions, CBM, Ireland. I congratulate CBM Ireland on its work in protecting the human rights of people with disabilities around the world and its advocacy on their behalf. It is important that we have the witnesses before us to tell their story because it is a very good news story. Today's meeting is timely in so far as the recently adopted sustainable development goals, SDGs, include references to people with disabilities. There are explicit references to them in the goals and we look forward to hearing more about the issue in this afternoon's presentation. The format of today's meeting will involve an opening statement followed by a question-and-answer session. I was delighted to hear that members of CBM Ireland from as far away as Australia saw our press release yesterday. It is good to see that we are being listened to far away as well.

I remind members and those in the public Gallery to switch off their mobile phones. They must ensure they are completely switched off for the duration of the meeting as they do cause interference even in silent mode with the recording equipment in the committee room.

Members are reminded of the long-standing parliamentary practice to the effect that they should not comment on, criticise or make charges against a person or body outside the Houses or an official either by name or in such a way as to make him or her identifiable. By virtue of section 17(2)(l) of the Defamation Act 2009, witnesses are protected by absolute privilege in respect of their evidence to the committee. However, if witnesses are directed by the Chairman to cease giving evidence on a particular matter and they continue to do so, they are entitled thereafter only to qualified privilege in respect of their evidence. Witnesses are directed that only evidence connected with the subject matter of these proceedings is to be given and they are asked to respect the parliamentary practice to the effect that, where possible, they should not criticise or make charges against any person, persons or entity by name or in such a way as to make him, her or it identifiable. Without further ado, I call on Ms O'Toole to make her opening statement.

**Deputy Eric Byrne:** I apologise in advance as I have to leave at 10.30 a.m. I am very sorry but it is one of those unique occasions that I must attend.

**Chairman:** We understand. I will allow Deputy Eric Byrne to speak first.

**Ms Sarah O'Toole:** First, let me extend our gratitude to the committee for inviting us to present to members and talk about the sustainable development goals and their impact on people with disabilities and also the impact of Ireland's commitments in its overseas development aid programme. I am the CEO of CBM Ireland and with me today is Mr. Lars Bosselmann,

director of advocacy for CBM International. On my left is Dr. Mary Keogh, a board member of CBM Ireland and also the adviser on advocacy and policy for both CBM International and CBM Australia. I will give a brief introduction about the organisation and Mr. Bosselmann will talk about the sustainable development goals. Dr. Keogh will speak further on Ireland's commitment to people with disabilities through the SDGs and our overseas development aid programme.

Members are probably aware that one in seven people in the world today live with a disability. That equates to 1 billion people. They are the world's largest minority. CBM is an international development organisation, committed to improving the quality of life of people with disabilities in the poorest countries of the world. We do that in a number of ways. Currently, we are working with approximately 500 partner organisations in 65 countries across Europe, Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. We work with the partner organisations to deliver medical services, health care, community-based rehabilitation, education and livelihood opportunities for people with disabilities and their families.

When an emergency occurs in times of conflict or natural disaster, we ensure the rights of people with disabilities in those situations are not forgotten. We partner with local organisations on the ground to provide access to emergency relief and supplies for people with disabilities. In terms of our advocacy work both in Ireland and internationally, we work to protect the human rights of people with disabilities are met both in development policies and programmes. We work with governments, state agencies and other development organisations to ensure we meet that goal. I will hand over to Mr. Bosselmann who will speak further on the sustainable development goals.

**Mr. Lars Bosselmann:** I thank Ms O'Toole. I also thank members for their kind invitation to speak before the committee. As the Chairman has already said, in contrast to the millennium development goals, the sustainable development goals that were recently adopted and that will be in place for the next 15 years include a number of specific references to the rights of persons with disabilities. I will start by making some reflections on why that is important and why the disability movement has fought so hard for almost the past three years to get inclusion and recognition in the SDGs of the rights of persons with disabilities. These kind of global frameworks set and agree priorities for a long time. When a topic is included, it is much easier to argue that it is important. When a topic is not included, it is almost impossible to talk to decision makers, officials and others about it because they say "It is definitely an important cause but it is not part of the globally agreed agenda" and it stays as a sort of side issue. That happened frequently with the millennium development goals, for example, in the case of disability. We are extremely happy that the potential now exists for this to change in the context of the sustainable development goals.

The second point I will make is that it is important for a topic to be included in the sustainable development goals from the beginning because they will be in place for 15 years, which is a long time. If a topic is not included, which is what happened with disability in the case of the millennium development goals, it is out for 15 years. It is very difficult to rectify that during the course of the implementation of global frameworks that have been agreed.

The third point I would like to make is an obvious one. The global frameworks determine to a large extent where the money goes. If that were not the case, why would priorities be set? If the cause one is defending is not part of the agenda, money will not be spent on it.

My final point relates to what happens when an issue is not included in an agenda such as the

millennium development goals or the sustainable development goals. What is not in is not measured. The big advantage of the sustainable development goals from our perspective is that disability is included. It is there, so it needs to be measured, reported and monitored. That is one of the most significant things the sustainable development goals have the potential to achieve.

I will explain the importance of measurement. As a result of the exclusion of disability from the millennium development goals, today in 2015 we have a fairly weak body of evidence with regard to disability. There are good examples of country studies and case studies and there are good research pieces here and there, but overall we have a fairly weak body of evidence regarding how many people with disabilities there are, where they are living globally, what their needs are and how they can be included in different sectors such as education and employment. That is why it is so important for the collection of data to be improved. We need to have data available so that we know where people with disabilities live, what their needs are and how policies can better address their rights and needs. We need a much better base of data and evidence than we have at present. One of the achievements of the sustainable development goals is that they foresee making data disaggregation a reality in their implementation. For those who want to have the precise reference, this is set out in goal 17.

Implementation has already been mentioned. Of course the sustainable development goals, like all global frameworks, will only be as good as we make their implementation. We all have a role to play - I refer to civil society, parliamentarians, Governments and UN agencies - in living up to the high expectations that have been raised. We have to be honest and say that expectations have been raised with regard to disability and many other causes. Of course expectations are high because disability is included this time. We want to see progress in implementation as well as inclusion in the document. For that reason, it is important to look at monitoring, at how to translate global goals to the national reality, at the indicators and at how to measure progress. Parliamentarians and many others have a role to play in all of that. My colleague, Dr. Keogh, will say a few words and offer a few thoughts and suggestions from our side on the concrete things the committee can do to make the goals for people with disabilities a reality.

**Dr. Mary Keogh:** I thank the joint committee for the invite. I am honoured to be here. Mr. Bosselmann spoke about the international context and the sustainable development goals. I will speak about the Irish context. In recent years, the Government and Irish Aid have made significant progress on the inclusion of people with disabilities in Ireland's overseas programme. As the briefing paper that has been furnished to the committee goes through that in detail, I will not allude further to it. I suggest it is fair to say that the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is largely driving the commitments being made by the Government with regard to inclusive development. I know the Government has set out a roadmap for the ratification of the UN convention in the future.

The significance of the One World, One Future policy is that it involves a leadership approach to disability. This progressive document commits the Government to devoting more resources to achieving equality for people with disabilities. We are delighted to see that Irish Aid is delivering on these important commitments to people with disabilities in the developing world in areas such as human rights, public services and livelihoods. We acknowledge that the parliamentary questions which have been discussed in recent times have given an increased visibility to people with disabilities in the overseas aid programme. There is a commitment within that programme to look at Ireland's role in ensuring the implementation of the sustainable development goals is inclusive of people with disabilities.

This is a crux time because the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

and the sustainable development goals have given us a foundation, for one of the first times ever, to advance the human rights of people with disabilities who live in some of the poorest countries of the world. We strongly urge the committee, in its regular review of Ireland's overseas development aid programme and in its future progress reports on sustainable development goals, to look at ways of measuring the specific impacts these initiatives are having on people with disabilities. Mr. Bosselmann alluded to that when he spoke about the importance of monitoring data.

We would like to see continuing engagement. We have had very good engagement with Irish Aid in recent years through CBM Ireland and through the coalitions with the Dóchas working group on disability and development. We would like to see that continue. We are endeavouring to work in partnership to ensure we can support an international development programme that is inclusive of people with disabilities.

**Chairman:** I thank the witnesses. I will allow Deputy Eric Byrne to speak first because he has to go soon.

**Deputy Eric Byrne:** I apologise for being late and for having to leave early. I congratulate the witnesses and thank them for their presentation. I have read their substantial documentation and have put it on file upstairs for future reference. I thank Dr. Keogh for acknowledging the Government's efforts to fine-tune its overseas development aid programme through Irish Aid. I have a great deal of experience of Africa, having lived there for four years. In comparing the facilities that are available in premier western countries to treat people with disabilities with the ability of countries like Sierra Leone that have emerged from war to look after such people, we need to bear in mind the presence of indigenous illnesses like malaria in such countries. The effects of malaria can have a damaging effect on the brain. Similarly, I remember that the Masai people used to put stuff on their hair - I think it was cow dung - and blindness was a significant problem for them. When one compares the ability of various societies to treat people with disabilities as equals, it is clear that we have greater prospects in that regard in the west. That is why the sustainable development goals are of key importance. They reflect an international commitment to treat everybody as an equal citizen of the world. I congratulate the witnesses and ask them to keep up the good work. I apologise again for having to leave the meeting.

**Deputy Dan Neville:** I welcome the witnesses and thank them for their presentation. This important area has been neglected over the decades. Those of us who have travelled to Third World countries with Irish Aid have seen some examples of that neglect. I would like to raise two particular issues, the first of which is Irish Aid's approach to the treatment of intellectual disability in developing countries. Globally, we must ensure that disabilities are included in sustainable development goals, SDGs, and so on. However, people in many of the countries in question think of physical disability more than intellectual disability. In Ireland, we have spent decades working on developing thinking in this regard, so it is not unique. It was the thinking in the western world 100 years ago or less.

While mental illness is an illness and not a disability, it is often included with disabilities in the countries to which I refer. Sometimes, the treatment of mental illness falls between the two stools of disability and physical illness because of a question of interpretation. People occasionally group intellectual disability and mental illness together but intellectual disability is a condition, not an illness. Will the witnesses address these points?

I have seen extreme neglect of disability in other countries. In India, for example, there are people with disabilities on the streets as a result of that country's caste system. Very distress-



ingly, I have seen people with extreme disabilities begging on streets and trying to survive while being neglected by every system. That is how it appears, so perhaps the witnesses will clarify the position. India is not strictly a Third World country but that could be argued. This problem is present and the cultures of some countries have a bearing on the neglect of people with disabilities and mental illness. A short address on this issue would be appreciated.

**Chairman:** If Senator Mullins needs to go to the Seanad, does he wish to contribute now? Does Deputy Crowe mind?

**Deputy Seán Crowe:** No.

**Senator Michael Mullins:** I thank the witnesses for their positive presentations. That disabilities and so on are included in the SDGs is significant for our guests. I read their submissions briefly. They are doing significant work in some of the most troubled parts of the world. What level of support are they getting from Irish Aid and how has that changed in recent years in light of the worsening humanitarian situation in some parts of the world? What are the group's plans, ambitions and main objectives for 2016 and what are the most difficult challenges it faces?

**Chairman:** I will ask the witnesses to respond to a number of those questions now. Senator Mullins asked about the level of support from Irish Aid for projects. Will the witnesses tell us about those projects? We would appreciate it.

**Ms Sarah O'Toole:** Of course, and I thank members for their comments and questions. We have partnered with Irish Aid for a number of years. Currently, we are co-funding a project with it in Goma in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, DRC. It is a significant programme for us because we are working on community-based rehabilitation, which is focused on providing access to services for people with disabilities and ensuring their participation in providing those services. It is a significant leap forward in how we deliver our development programmes. The project focuses on orthopaedic care. It is sometimes misleading when one says, "Christian Blind Mission", so we say "CBM". Our founding services related to eye health but they now concern eye health, ear and hearing care, physical disability, mental health and intellectual disability. We cover the whole spectrum of disability. We view poverty as a cause of disability and *vice versa* in the communities in which we work.

In 2015, Irish Aid gave us funding to the tune of €51,500 for the Goma project. We hope to build upon that project. We welcome that we are a recipient of a civil society fund grant from Irish Aid. An important part of the programme is that it supplies us with good data on how to provide our services better. They also serve as a measure of the programme's performance. We are committed to that. Significantly, we seek to fight the stigma of disability under the programme. Members spoke about culture and beliefs around disability. We have a group of community workers involved in the project who are trained. They also have disabilities. They go into communities to discuss the project and encourage people to participate and come forward for services. It is an important project for us. Obviously, we hope to build on it next year and work more closely with Irish Aid with a view to disability-inclusive development in the broader sense and a consideration of how we might assist in developing and enhancing programmes in order to ensure that people with disabilities are not left behind.

**Dr. Mary Keogh:** I could give an example of a project that CBM has in Ghana. It works with people with mental health issues and tries to improve their integration in their community. As Ms O'Toole mentioned, this is done via self-help and empowerment. It is a major focus of

CBM's work in terms of working with people with intellectual disabilities and mental health issues. It has led to benefits for people in their community, in that they have developed to the point of running their own businesses, gained acceptance from other community members and become involved in a stronger movement in their local area to hold decision makers to account. It has been a successful project.

**Mr. Lars Bosselmann:** I am happy to add an aspect in response to one of the questions. It is important for CBM International to view ourselves and the cause of disability not just as a theme that we are concerned with and working on but as a broader movement towards human rights and their realisation. Many groups in the population do not qualify medically as persons with disabilities but are marginalised and excluded from their communities or societies. It is important to us that we fight for the same rights for everyone. We focus on disability in our project work but we do that from a human rights perspective. The SDGs call on all of us, including CBM and civil society, to see that bigger picture and work on it comprehensively. We try to move strongly in that direction.

**Chairman:** I thank the witnesses.

**Deputy Seán Crowe:** I have a couple of questions. Some will be obvious. Does the name "Christian Blind Mission" cause difficulties in some of the countries in which the organisation operates, particularly those where there are sectarian tensions between people from different religious backgrounds?

**Chairman:** Someone might answer that now. I will revert to the Deputy.

**Mr. Lars Bosselmann:** I will answer. It mainly causes misunderstandings but not trouble or difficulties, which are different. We must always explain that, while these are our roots, value base and history as an organisation, that does not mean that we are doing missionary work. Instead, we are working with people. This means among our own staff as well as with partners and the projects that we support. We do not ask people to be Christians or have a Christian faith base. We are working with everyone. That question arises, as the Deputy has rightly guessed. We have to explain that, but it is not something that causes trouble or difficulty in the ongoing work.

**Deputy Seán Crowe:** The work CBM is involved in includes work on inclusion and participation by people with disabilities, empowerment of people with disabilities, disability prevention and support and the promotion and protection of the rights of people with disabilities. In regard to people in Ireland with disabilities, does CBM have to explain its work to people who feel excluded from Irish society? Some people would say we have enough of a problem here at home and ask why CBM is not addressing that problem.

**Dr. Mary Keogh:** Yes, we are cognisant of that. We are discussing this in the context of the sustainable development goals, SDGs, which are both international and national. Therefore, the Irish Government will also be considering the creation of a plan for Ireland, which will provide an opportunity to advance the rights of people with disabilities. As a campaigner for disability rights in Ireland previously, I am quite proud of the fact that the Irish Government funds overseas programmes that include people with disabilities. I do not see it as an either-or situation.

**Deputy Seán Crowe:** On CBM's work in co-ordination with the UN Refugee Agency, does it work with refugees with disabilities in refugee camps?

The scale of the problem of disability is huge. We are talking about 1 billion people with disabilities, 80% of whom live in developing countries in areas of high risk. Does CBM work in areas like that? Many of those people fleeing from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan have disabilities. Is CBM working with them?

**Ms Sarah O'Toole:** We have been doing work in the camps in areas around the Middle East. However, much of the time people with disabilities have been left behind in those countries where conflict is happening. We concentrate on the surrounding areas where we can help and that is the extent of our work there.

**Deputy Seán Crowe:** What is CBM's view on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities? In March 2007, Ireland signed the convention but did not ratify it. Since then it has been ratified by 156 countries. Is CBM satisfied with the Government's reasons for not having ratified this convention?

**Dr. Mary Keogh:** Recently the Irish Government set out a roadmap in regard to the ratification of the convention, but as far as I am aware, the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Bill has not been enacted yet. Everybody is eagerly awaiting Ireland's ratification of the convention and the roadmap has been set out for that.

**Deputy Olivia Mitchell:** I apologise for not being present to hear the presentation, due to an earlier meeting. I wish to state my support for the work of CBM and to wish it continued success, particularly with its Irish Aid programme. I hope it goes well.

**Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan:** I want to acknowledge the work being done by CBM. I had not realised the impact of disasters on people with disabilities until I attended the event held by CBM in regard to the Philippines. That brought home in a stark way the impact disasters, whether man-made or natural, have on communities, but the impact on people with disabilities is 100,000 times worse. We are not as cognisant of that as we should be.

I know CBM is supportive of - I acknowledge the work it has done on this - having disability included in many of the sustainable development goals. However, we know these goals will not be worth the paper they are written on unless we make plans and these are monitored and implemented. I know there could be difficulties in regard to this if we just consider the data in terms of disability, as opposed to disaggregating it. I would like to hear CBM's views on that. It is important we get the evidence and that work is evidence-based in the future. If something is not working or achieving the target, how are we to deal with that? I believe regular but strict monitoring is required and that we need specific data on the goals and whether they are being achieved.

**Chairman:** To add to that, there are numerous targets in the sustainable development goals. Are they achievable and can they be met?

**Ms Sarah O'Toole:** Perhaps Mr. Bosselmann will deal with that.

**Mr. Lars Bosselmann:** I am happy to take that question. As a rule, the difficult questions come to me. How could I now sit here and say the goals will not be achieved? However, the point is well taken. There are 17 goals and 169 targets and it goes without saying that these numbers tell us it will be difficult to achieve and make equal progress on all targets and goals.

It is important that we look at the progress we make globally and overall towards achieving the targets. Also, every country comes at this from a different starting point in regard to



making progress towards the targets. The monitoring must make that differentiation and must understand that Ireland, Germany and others do not come from the same starting point as, for example, Malawi. This is part of the novelty of the SDGs compared to the millennium development goals, and it is because it is global. Of course, this also makes the monitoring pretty complex and complicated, because it can be difficult to make comparisons. It is not really about making comparisons, but about tailoring the goals to the status of each country.

Overall, we are 15 years working in development. This may seem a long time, but it is a short time in development. A key target for me is to sustain the momentum that has been created around the adoption of the SDGs, not only in New York in September, so that we do not waste the next five to eight years. The first half of the implementation phase is critical, because that is often when it becomes a little difficult to implement global frameworks. We are also satisfied now the goals have been adopted, because we have been working already for up to three years on them - not just CBM but all UN agencies and governments. Often after the goals are adopted, we are inclined to relax a little and take time to breathe, but that is not what should happen. The momentum must be sustained because the next years are critical for making progress.

**Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan:** I have a particular question for Dr. Keogh regarding funding for disability groups. Will she fill us in on the organisations that are working here and advocating for people with disabilities and how happy or unhappy she is with the level of funding?

**Dr. Mary Keogh:** I thank Deputy O'Sullivan for that question. I would always advocate for increased funding for disability organisations that are representative of disabled people, whether these are at home in Ireland or overseas within our international development work. Ultimately, disabled people are experts for themselves. We have come through a period of exclusion and are now at the table, so now is the time for funding and facilitation to support that.

**Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan:** On monitoring for the future, what is the best framework for looking at the sustainable development goals in terms of disability and of ensuring they work? Are there frameworks operating in other countries that we can adopt? We need to see progress on these goals. There has been disquiet over the millennium development goals in regard to how much they achieved. Now we have 17 sustainable development goals and have an even greater task. It is important we monitor regularly whether these goals are being achieved and if not, why not, and that if necessary we can then move in a different direction.

**Dr. Mary Keogh:** At that moment there is a growing consensus among a number of governments. For example, UK Aid and the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade are looking at the Washington Group on Disability Statistics, which provides a short set of questions that can be applied to statistical surveys within a country to gather data on disability. Currently, there is investment at UN level for that. Therefore, I believe that may be the framework for the future. Again, because we are working through a global framework, different countries will have a different approach. This appears to be the consensus at the moment. There is progress on that and I can provide further detail. I can send the committee a paper, if that is helpful.

**Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan:** It would be useful if the committee had those questions.

**Dr. Mary Keogh:** Yes.

**Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan:** It would mean we could pursue this matter with the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade or otherwise.

**Chairman:** Dr. Keogh might come back to the secretariat on the matter.

**Dr. Mary Keogh:** Yes.

**Deputy Seán Crowe:** Deputy O'Sullivan spoke about the hurricanes and typhoons which hit the Philippines. The main point was that we had to raise awareness of disabled people living in such places and how vulnerable they are. After such events, people face difficulties trying to travel from one place to another. The message was that disability should be at the heart of any response. How aware are the different programmes of that issue? Disability is unquestionably a development and poverty issue. How can we better mainstream disability into the development process?

**Ms Sarah O'Toole:** I will talk about emergencies and disasters. A Sendai framework was developed at a conference on disability, inclusive development, disaster and risk reduction. On that occasion, we advocated for people with disabilities to be included in the framework. I am delighted that a specific reference to people with disabilities has been included in all emergency response programmes. Hopefully, that will merge together with the sustainable development goals, thus ensuring we have inclusion throughout for sustainable development and in emergency situations.

The Philippines were mentioned. Last year we were delighted to host a disabled persons' organisation that we partnered with when the typhoon hit. It was a partner we had worked with for a number of years. Importantly, in terms of our response, it knew where the people with disabilities were and was able to access them. That was crucial in saving many lives. It responded quite actively during that disaster by getting emergency supplies to people with disabilities, whether it was simply their medication or blankets or getting them out of the situation in which they found themselves. For us, it is not just about us delivering services to people with disabilities; it is about the participation of those groups. We support a number of disabled persons' organisations around the world, as does Irish Aid. We think that is an important part of true inclusive development. We are at a point in time where we have a real opportunity for true inclusion. As Mr. Lars Bosselmann said, we should not wait for ratification and decisions on indicators. Ireland has a very significant overseas development aid programme and has made significant commitments to people with disabilities. We are at a point now where we must start to measure performance and we urge the committee to build that into its annual review in terms of Ireland's commitments. There are frameworks that Ireland can use and now is the time to do it so that nobody is forgotten.

**Chairman:** Is the delegation aware of a country or government that has stood out in terms of its dealings with people with disabilities? Is there a good programme in place, particularly in developing countries?

**Ms Sarah O'Toole:** CBM Ireland supports a number of programmes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in one of our key programmes, we work with its ministry of health in a national programme to eradicate river blindness. It is a very significant programme in that country. Some countries have eradicated river blindness by distributing medicine.

**Chairman:** The Carter Foundation is very good at doing such work.

**Ms Sarah O'Toole:** Yes. These programmes allow people to access medication that will save their lives. We are involved in a number of those programmes throughout Africa. Many governments have taken the issue of tropical diseases very seriously and want to overcome

them in order to prevent disability.

**Chairman:** There is a vote in the Dáil. As there are no more questions, I thank the witnesses most sincerely for being so open and frank. They have answered every question. I thank them sincerely for appearing before the committee. Their presentations were really good. I ask them to keep in touch with the committee secretariat and to contact us if they have any questions or issues they wish us to raise. We would be delighted to raise any issues, as Deputy O'Sullivan, outlined.

The joint committee adjourned at 10.55 a.m. until 10 a.m. on Wednesday, 9 December 2015.