

DÓCHAS
The Irish Association of Non-Governmental Development Organisations

PRESS STATEMENT

28 November 2008

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20th World AIDS Day being observed

Development NGOs: AIDS will continue to spread if women's rights are not protected

Today, the world marks the 20th anniversary of World AIDS Day, an international day to highlight the challenges and consequences of the global AIDS epidemic. World AIDS Day is an opportunity to consider the enormous efforts required to halt the spread of the HIV virus and to improve the lives of the 33 million people living with the virus.

“Twenty years ago, the world’s health ministers agreed that a united global effort is required if we are to achieve the aim of halting the spread of HIV and AIDS. Yet, in the 20 years since that summit, the epidemic has grown, so that now 33 million people are infected by the virus. Each day, over 5,000 people die of AIDS” said Hans Zomer, of Dóchas, the umbrella group of Ireland’s Development NGOs.

“Yet much has been achieved in the last decade. Donors have recognised that HIV and AIDS are undoing many of the gains made by development aid, and drugs that can halt the spread of the disease have become available. Sadly, it is taking far too long for these drugs to become available for poor people. And this is compounded by the fact that prevention measures are not reaching the poor and most vulnerable” Zomer stated.

Ireland’s Development NGOs believe that a renewed focus on prevention is critical. If the current HIV transmission rates continue, the demand for funds to provide treatment for infected people will continue to outstrip available funding.

“One of the key factors in the continuing spread of HIV and AIDS is the lack of women’s power over their own lives. Violence against women, limited education for girls, poor access to treatment and lack of women’s representation at all levels of decision-making fuel the spread of AIDS. By now, 60% of people living with HIV in Africa are women, and among young people that figure is even as high as

3 out of every 4” said Breda Gahan, Chairperson of the Dóchas group that focuses on HIV and AIDS.

Gahan continued: “In our experience, inequality is a major factor in contributing to the spread and impact of HIV and AIDS, and that in responding to the epidemic, the underlying causes of gender inequality must be addressed.”

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Dóchas is the association of Irish Non-Governmental Development Organisations. It provides a forum for consultation and cooperation between its 39 members, and helps them speak with a single voice on development issues. For more information, visit: www.dochas.ie

Dóchas Member Agencies

1. ActionAid Ireland
2. Action from Ireland
3. Aidlink
4. Amnesty International-Irish Section
5. Bóthar
6. Centre for Global Education
7. ChildFund Ireland
8. Children in Crossfire
9. Christian Aid Ireland
10. Church Mission Society Ireland
11. Comhlámh
12. Concern Worldwide
13. Friends of Londiani (Ireland)

14. Galway One World Centre
15. Gorta
16. International Service Ireland
17. Irish League of Credit Unions Foundation
18. Irish Commission for Justice and Social Affairs
19. Irish Council for International Students
20. Irish Family Planning Association
21. Irish Foundation for Cooperative Development
22. Irish Missionary Union
23. Irish Red Cross
24. Kerry Action for Development Education
25. National Youth Council of Ireland
26. Oxfam Ireland
27. Plan Ireland
28. Self Help Africa
29. Skillshare International Ireland
30. Suas Educational Development
31. The Hope Foundation
32. Trócaire
33. Vita
34. Voluntary Service International
35. Voluntary Service Overseas
36. Volunteer Missionary Movement
37. War on Want Northern Ireland
38. Wingspread International
39. World Vision Ireland