

DÓCHAS
The Irish Association of Non-Governmental Development Organisations

PRESS STATEMENT

1 May 2009

**Development NGOs say
Government deliberately targets the poor and vulnerable**

Government cuts support to Irish charities by 20-25%

44 of Ireland's leading aid agencies reacted with shock to Minister Peter Power's refusal to rule out further cuts to the overseas aid budget.

Minister Peter Power made the comments earlier this week at the Annual General Meeting of Dóchas, the umbrella group of Irish aid agencies. In response, Irish NGOs said that the government is targeting the aid budget out of sheer political expediency and short-sightedness.

"The government's strategy to fight the recession is based on attempts to repair our damaged international reputation as a country open for business. Yet, our government is deliberately and willfully ruining our reputation as a country that keeps its promises" said Hans Zomer, Director of the Dóchas network of Ireland's development NGOs.

"We made promises to the world's poorest people, and built a global reputation on the strength of those promises. That reputation lies in tatters now that the government has shown it is willing to cut the aid budget at every possible opportunity. We are fast acquiring a reputation as fair weather friends, rather than serious international partners" said Zomer.

The Dóchas AGM called on the government to stop targeting the aid budget, as the aid cuts are hitting the poorest people on earth.

The members of Dóchas heard that their income from government will be slashed by 20-25%, leading to the cancellation of a great number of vital projects.

"Our member organisations are working in the world's poorest countries, supporting the world's most vulnerable people. They are supported in this work by hundreds of thousands of Irish people and by the government. This year, the government has slashed its support to the work of NGOs, by nearly 25%. Our members now will have to cancel programmes. Yet,

the government refuses to rule out further cuts to this work, which saves countless lives”, said Hans Zomer of Dóchas.

“We are calling on the government to make sure there will be no further cuts to the aid budget, and to present a clear plan on how we are going to keep our promise to help make poverty history,” said Mr. Zomer.

ENDS

Notes for the Editors

About Dóchas

- At the AGM, the Dóchas network welcomed five new members: the Africa Centre, Camara, Christian Blind Mission, Progressio Ireland and SightSavers Ireland were admitted as members, bringing the total membership up to 44 organisations.

About the aid cuts

- At the UN Millennium Review Summit in 2005, the Taoiseach Bertie Ahern committed Ireland to reaching the UN target for spending 0.7% of our GNP on overseas aid in 2012.
- The government set interim targets “against which our progress towards the target can be measured”. The interim target set for 2010, next year, is 0.6% of GNI.
- Due to massive and unprecedented cuts to the budget, Ireland’s aid expenditure for 2009 is predicted to fall well short of the target and reach only 0.48% of GNI.
- The Irish overseas aid budget has been cut by €45 million in July 2008, by another €15 million in October, by €95 million in February this year and by a further €100 million in April 2009.
- The cuts in 2009 alone represent 22% of the total aid budget; well in excess of the reduction in national income, which is estimated to be around 8%.

For further information, see www.dochas.ie

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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. Africa Centre
4. Aidlink
5. Amnesty International-Irish Section
6. Bóthar
7. Camara
8. Centre for Global Education
9. ChildFund Ireland
10. Children in Crossfire
11. Christian Aid Ireland
12. Christian Blind Mission Ireland
13. Church Mission Society Ireland
14. Comhlámh
15. Concern Worldwide
16. Friends of Londiani (Ireland)
17. Galway One World Centre
18. Gorta
19. International Service Ireland
20. Irish League of Credit Unions Foundation
21. Irish Commission for Justice and Social Affairs
22. Irish Council for International Students
23. Irish Family Planning Association
24. Irish Foundation for Cooperative Development
25. Irish Missionary Union
26. Irish Red Cross
27. Kerry Action for Development Education
28. National Youth Council of Ireland
29. Oxfam Ireland
30. Plan Ireland
31. Progressio Ireland
32. Self Help Africa
33. SightSavers International
34. Skillshare International Ireland
35. Suas Educational Development
36. The Hope Foundation
37. Trócaire

38. Vita
39. Voluntary Service International
40. Voluntary Service Overseas
41. Volunteer Missionary Movement
42. War on Want Northern Ireland
43. Wingspread International
44. World Vision Ireland