

PRESS RELEASE

Dublin, 1 December 2009

Aid Works: Global number of AIDS-related deaths down by 10%

Irish Government Urged to 'Keep the Promise' this World AIDS Day

Funding cuts to overseas development aid are already having a detrimental impact on the global HIV and AIDS response. This World AIDS Day (1 December), Dóchas is calling on the Government to keep its promise to the world's poorest people by not making any further cuts to overseas aid in the upcoming budget.

With nine days to go before the Budget is announced, leading Irish NGOs are expressing concern over the impact of aid cuts on the fight against HIV and AIDS and the hardship that further cuts could cause. Over the past years the number of AIDS related deaths has declined by over 10%, yet each day 5,700 people die from AIDS-related illness. This is preventable.

Ireland's HIV and AIDS funding supports a wide range of prevention, treatment and care activities for people living with and affected by HIV and AIDS in some of the world's poorest areas. The withdrawal of funding to date has meant that existing and planned work has had to be cut entirely or scaled back substantially.

- In Zambia, Concern has had to put on hold a project supporting 2,000 children and their carers.
- Another Concern project, in Uganda, which would have provided 28,000 people with information about preventing the spread of HIV was also stopped. Such information is urgently needed when there were 2.7 million new HIV infections globally in 2008.
- The aid cuts have prompted Trócaire to close its HIV programme in Angola. This will mean that support to eight different organisations, reaching out to just under 80,000 people, will have to end.
- Other NGOs, such as Action Aid, Child Fund Ireland, Christian Aid, Oxfam Ireland, Plan Ireland, Skillshare International Ireland and World Vision Ireland, have had to reduce HIV prevention and support activities as well as the number of people benefiting from the programmes.

In addition to the severe reduction to the funding provided to NGOs, other elements of Irish Aid's HIV programme have also been cut. The Global Fund to fight AIDS, TB and Malaria, which is supporting programmes in 140 countries and faces a substantial budget shortfall, has had its Irish Aid funding cut by €14million. The International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (IAVI), working on the development of safe, effective, accessible, preventive HIV vaccines has had its funding from Irish Aid completely eliminated this year.

Breda Gahan, chairperson of the Dóchas HIV Working Group, said:

“Ireland has been recognised internationally for its commitment to HIV within its overseas work. Now is not the time for Ireland to ignore its promise to some of the worlds’ poorest and most marginalised populations, and weaken the international efforts to halt the spread of HIV”.

At the UN Special HIV and AIDS Meeting held in New York in 2008, the Irish representative stated that, ‘Ireland has prioritised the fight against HIV and AIDS as fundamental to poverty and vulnerability reduction. We are living up to the promises made at this General Assembly in 2001 and 2006’. Dóchas is now calling for Ireland to follow up on these fine words by protecting its overseas aid and its HIV programme.

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Notes to editors:

Dóchas is the umbrella organisation of Irish Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) involved in development and relief overseas and/or development education in Ireland. Dóchas aims to provide a forum for consultation and cooperation among its 44 members as well as to help them speak with a single voice on development issues. More information at www.dochas.ie

The Dóchas HIV and AIDS Working includes Action Aid Ireland, Christian Aid, Childfund Ireland, Concern Worldwide, Oxfam Ireland, Irish Family Planning Association, Plan Ireland, Skillshare International Ireland, Trócaire, VSO and World Vision.

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