

DÓCHAS

The Irish Association of Non-Governmental Development Organisations

9 September 2009

PRESS RELEASE

222 people – one for every €1 million cut from the aid budget – gather outside Department of Finance to call on Government to show that Ireland does care

Today, Ireland's aid agencies called on the government to 'get back on track' with its overseas aid promise to reach the 0.7% GDP target by 2012.

Gathering outside the Department of Finance, 222 people representing the €222 million cut from the Irish aid budget this year, declared that, even in difficult economic times, we do care about the poorest people of our world.

“We must not cut our aid budget, as aid from Ireland is having a tremendously positive effect on the lives of poor people the world over. We know that Ireland has a lot on its plate right now, and that we are reeling from the impact of the recession. Today, we are calling on the Government not to forget those who are suffering even more from the global crisis, the billion people in the world's poorest countries” said Malcolm Quigley, Director of VSO Ireland and spokesman for the 222 people gathering outside the Department of Finance.

This year, the Government has cut overseas aid by €222 million, or 24% of the budget for 2009 – twice as much as the reduction in GNI.

“We made a promise to the world. We promised to spend a certain percentage of our national income, comparable of just 70 cents in every 100 euro, on helping less fortunate countries. By cutting the overseas aid budget, the government has done nothing to redress our economy but has seriously endangered our reputation as a country that keeps its word. The truth is, we can't afford to damage our reputation any further” said Derek McDowell, Head of Advocacy for Concern.

Last week, the NGOs made a presentation to the Oireachtas Foreign Affairs Committee, showing that the aid cuts are already having a devastating impact on the lives of people living in absolute poverty.

“At a time when the world's most vulnerable people are already feeling the impact of the financial crisis and the effects of climate change - caused by rich nations –

we want to remind the government that Irish people want our long-standing solidarity with the poorest people of our world to continue. As a nation, we do not want to see the weakest and most vulnerable suffer disproportionately” said Hans Zomer, Director of Dóchas, the network of Ireland’s aid agencies.

“To target the poorest and most vulnerable who have done least to cause this crisis is a terrible injustice. The government needs to get back on track and keep its promise to the world's poor”, said Zomer.

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About Dóchas

- Dóchas is the association of 44 of Ireland’s development NGOs.
For further information, see www.dochas.ie

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 cuts in 2009 alone represent 24% of the total aid budget for the year; well in excess of the reduction in national income, which is estimated to be around 8-10%.

For further information, see www.dochas.ie

Dóchas is the association of Irish Non-Governmental Development Organisations. It provides a forum for consultation and cooperation between its 44 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