

DÓCHAS

The Irish Association of Non-Governmental Development Organisations

21 May 2009

Aid Agencies Welcome Seanad Support for Overseas Aid

Debate in Seanad reveals cross-party support for call to stop cutting aid programme

Commenting on yesterday's [20 May] debate in Seanad Éireann, Dóchas, the umbrella group of development NGOs, welcomed Senators' support for Ireland's overseas aid programme.

The debate took place following the publication earlier this month of an external review of Irish aid, undertaken by the OECD. That report showed that aid from Ireland is "world class", but that it had been damaged by the government's budget cuts.

Fianna Fáil Senators had tabled a motion congratulating the government with the OECD report's findings.

"We are delighted to see the extent of political support for Ireland's overseas aid programme, and we note that this support ranges across all parties and groups represented in the Seanad" said Hans Zomer, spokesman of Dóchas.

"The Seanad has given a very clear signal to the government that it does not want to see further cuts to Ireland's overseas aid. All speakers in the debate highlighted that aid from Ireland is first class, and is saving countless lives every day. Moreover, Senators said that our aid programme should be a source of national pride, and not be an easy target for government cuts" continued Zomer.

The OECD review of Irish aid was launched on 7 May. Irish aid agencies have pointed out that the report demonstrates that Ireland's aid has clear and tangible benefits for poor people in the world's poorest countries, as well as for Ireland itself – Ireland has become a world leader in the fight against hunger and AIDS, and our aid programme has given Ireland a degree of influence well beyond what other countries of similar size enjoy.

"The government's strategy to fight the recession is based on attempts to repair our damaged international reputation as a country that is 'open for business'. Yet, by cutting the aid budget, our government is deliberately and willfully damaging our reputation as a country that keeps its promises" said Hans Zomer of Dóchas.

"We welcome that Seanad Éireann has echoed our call on the government to make sure that 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

- 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 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 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

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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