

DÓCHAS
The Irish Association of Non-Governmental Development Organisations

PRESS STATEMENT

30 April 2009

“No More Aid Cuts” say 39 aid agencies

**National conference of Development NGOs
says aid now needed more than ever**

Today's Annual General Meeting of Ireland's Development NGOs called on the government to show leadership and improve our cooperation with the countries worst affected by the global economic crisis.

"Ireland is still in the middle of an economic storm of enormous scale. Everyone in this country is affected and we are all feeling the difference in our wallets. And around the world, one billion people are feeling the effects – this year, the number of people going hungry has gone up drastically, as a direct result of the crisis" said Helen Keogh, Chairperson of Dóchas, the umbrella group of Ireland's leading aid agencies.

Participants at the Dóchas AGM voiced their shock at the government's massive cuts to Ireland's overseas aid budget over the last ten months. They called on Minister of State Peter Power, who is responsible for the government's aid programme and was on hand to open proceedings, to redouble his efforts to ensure that Ireland keeps its promises to the world's poorest people.

"Ireland has traditionally been a world leader in international development cooperation. Sadly, it now is well out of step with world leaders, who have spoken - and acted - on the need for more aid to help the world's poorest countries get through this global crisis. Instead of leading, Ireland is now retreating and cutting off aid to the real victims of the global crisis" said Ms Keogh, who has headed up Dóchas since 2006.

The Dóchas AGM called on the government to stop targeting the aid budget.

"To regain our leadership position, the government can start by making 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 Hans Zomer, Director of Dóchas.

“To quote EU Commission President Barroso: The recession must not, cannot, will not be used as an excuse for going back on our promises”

ENDS

Notes for the Editors

- 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. 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