

We Don't Care Less

Keep Ireland's aid promise - 2012

All-Party Group of TDs and Senators Says “No More Aid Cuts”

In a statement published on 12 November, a group of 30 TDs and Senators have called on the Government not to cut the overseas aid budget any further.

The group, which includes seven members of Fianna Fáil and three members of the Green Party, said cuts to the overseas aid budget had totaled €224 million, or the equivalent of 24%, since February this year. This was the biggest percentage cut imposed across any government department.

The all-party group (which also includes nine Labour TDs, seven from Fine Gael, two from Sinn Féin and two Independents) pointed out that earlier this year, the OECD praised Ireland as a “reliable and flexible” donor with a “cutting edge” aid programme.

“Ireland must stay true to its core values,” the group said. “These are values which contributed to our hard won international reputation as a nation, values such as solidarity, cooperation and integrity. One billion people, almost one in six people on the planet, are now going hungry, the first time this has happened in history.”

The group said that publicly and politically, Ireland's partnership with the developing world runs deep.

“In these most challenging times, Ireland can and should respond to the needs of the world's poorest people. Ireland is well placed to make a meaningful and lasting contribution to the elimination of hunger and poverty. The overseas aid budget represents less than 1% of overall projected government spending this year. Further cuts to such a small portion of our spending will have a very limited impact on our financial stability here in Ireland, but they will have a devastating impact on some of the most vulnerable people in the developing world.”

The full text of the statement is reproduced below:

All-Party Statement on Ireland's Commitment to the World's Poor

Earlier this year, the OECD praised Irish Aid as a ‘reliable and flexible’ donor with a ‘cutting edge’ aid programme. Praise we can certainly be proud of. However, cuts to the overseas aid budget have totalled €224 million, or the equivalent of 24%, since

February this year. This is the biggest percentage cut imposed across any government department.

Ireland is facing the most difficult challenges the nation has ever faced. There are difficult decisions to be made. Notwithstanding these challenges and the pressure they are placing on Irish people, Ireland must stay true to its core values. These are values which contributed to our hard won international reputation as a nation, values such as solidarity, cooperation and integrity.

Never before has such a perfect storm enveloped the world's poor. The financial and economic crises have come on top of a food and fuel crisis in early 2008 and the ongoing climate crisis is likely to be the greatest challenge they have ever faced. One billion people, almost one in six people on the planet, are now going hungry, the first time this has happened in history.

Irish NGOs are now faced with withdrawing their operations from some of the poorest countries in the world. Life-saving programmes are being stopped, such as programmes that are providing essential vaccinations to vulnerable children and clean water and sanitation services to poor communities. Women's lives in Uganda are being put at risk because their access to prenatal and post-natal care is being withdrawn. Families in Angola, who were eating two meals a day instead of one, may now go hungry once again as a result of their programme being cut. People who were already on the brink are being forced into even deeper poverty, resulting in increased morbidity, malnutrition and rising infant mortality.

Publicly and politically, Ireland's partnership with the developing world runs deep. Development and humanitarian policies sit at the heart of our foreign policy, promoting peace, development, prosperity and justice.

In these most challenging times, Ireland can and should respond to the needs of the world's poorest people. Ireland is well placed to make a meaningful and lasting contribution to the elimination of hunger and poverty. Our own tragic history of famine behoves us to do so.

The overseas aid budget represents less than 1% of overall projected government spending this year. Further cuts to such a small portion of our spending will have a very limited impact on our financial stability here in Ireland, but they will have a devastating impact on some of the most vulnerable people in the developing world. Investment requires long-term commitments and predictability in order for it to be effective. Withdrawing funding to well-established partners, programmes and beneficiaries is a short-sighted and inefficient means of protecting a substantial investment over the course of Irish Aid's existence.

We therefore earnestly call on the Government not to cut overseas aid any further in the next budget.

Signed by:

- **Chris Andrews TD**
- **Senator Dan Boyle**

- **Pat Breen TD**
- **Joan Burton TD**
- **Seán Connick TD**
- **Joe Costello TD**
- **Ciarán Cuffe TD** (Green Party Spokesperson on Foreign Affairs)
- **John Deasy TD** (Fine Gael Spokesperson with Special Responsibility for Overseas Development Aid)
- **Bernard Durkan TD** (Chairman of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on European Affairs)
- **Senator Dominic Hannigan**
- **Michael D Higgins TD** (Labour Party Spokesperson on Foreign Affairs)
- **Brendan Howlin TD** (Chairperson of the Association of European Parliamentarians for Africa)
- **Michael Kitt TD** (Former Minister of State with Special Responsibility for Overseas Development)
- **Tom Kitt TD** (Former Minister of State with Special Responsibility for Overseas Development)
- **Kathleen Lynch TD**
- **Olivia Mitchell TD**
- **Arthur Morgan TD**
- **Denis Naughten TD**
- **Dan Neville TD**
- **Charlie O'Connor TD**
- **Fergus O'Dowd TD**
- **Rory O'Hanlon TD** (Vice-Chairman of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs)
- **Senator Fiona O'Malley**
- **Brian O'Shea TD**
- **Aengus O'Snodaigh TD** (Sinn Féin Spokesperson on International Affairs)
- **Jan O'Sullivan TD**
- **Maureen O'Sullivan TD**
- **Ruairí Quinn TD**
- **Mary Upton TD**
- **Michael Woods TD** (Chairman of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs)

For further information, contact Simon Murtagh, The Association of European Parliamentarians for Africa (AWEPA), Tel: 087 3238718.