

**DÓCHAS Press Statement**  
**The Irish Association Of Non-governmental Development Organisations**  
**Date: 7th April 2009**

**Irish NGOs Say Unfair Aid Cuts Will Cost Lives -  
 Reaction To Supplementary Budget**

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- **Irish NGOs say unfair aid cuts will cost lives**
- **21.8% cut is disproportionate and dangerous, say aid agencies**

In their response to the Supplementary Budget announced by Minister for Finance Brian Lenihan today, Irish aid agencies said the aid cuts will have a devastating impact on the world's poorest people.

Today's cut is the fourth cut to the aid budget since June 2008. The Irish overseas aid budget was cut by €45 million in July 2008, another €15 million in October, and by €95 million in February this year. Today's announcement takes another €100 million off the budget.

"Today's Budget means that in the first four months of 2009 aid spending has been cut by €195 million, or 21.8% of the projected total for the year. Despite what the government says, such cuts are well beyond what would be fair, proportionate or just," said Hans Zomer, Director of Dóchas, the umbrella group of Ireland's major aid agencies.

Ireland's aid promises are directly linked to size of our economy. The aid targets are set as a percentage of gross national income (GNI) – as the economy shrinks, so does the aid budget. An 8% fall in national income should proportionately result in a cut of €71 million to the aid budget, not a cut of €195 million.

"These cuts go to the heart of Ireland's aid programme, and will without doubt lead to people losing their lives" said Hans Zomer. "Vital programmes providing clean water, health care, food and support to victims of disasters will now have to be cut."

Dóchas member organisations said that Ireland is now in serious danger of damaging the international good will built up over decades by missionaries and aid agencies.

"Irish aid agencies are supported by 850,000 people, without whom we would not be able to do our work. The support of all people in Ireland will be even more needed now, as the poorest people are suffering hardest from the crisis" continued Zomer.

"The Government must now set out clearly how it is going to honour its promise of dedicating 0.7% of GNI to overseas aid by 2012, and how it is going to ensure that these cuts can be implemented in ways that minimise the damage to the world's poorest people and communities".

**"Minister Lenihan says fairness must be the cornerstone of our efforts at renewal – how is it fair to make the world's poorest people pay?"**

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## NOTES FOR THE EDITORS

- This Dóchas statement is based on the following calculations:
  - **The budgeted (October 2008) spend for overseas aid in 2009 was €891 million.**
  - **This has now been cut to €696 million (€95 m in February 2009 and €100 million in April 2009)**
  - **If the aid budget was to shrink in proportion to national income (ie. -8%) that would suggest an automatic decrease in overseas aid by €71 million.**
  - **Such an automatic reduction in overseas aid would bring the total budget to €828 million for 2009, not €696 million which is the result of today's Budget.**
- The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) last week called for increased efforts to meet overseas aid targets and for member states to maintain a strong political priority to doing so, echoing what development NGOs have been saying in Ireland.

Strong political priority should be given to meeting aid targets, the OECD said, adding that “aid cuts at this point in time would place a dangerous additional burden on developing countries already faced with restricted sources of income and poverty, and perhaps undo some of the progress already made towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals.”

The latest OECD aid statistics, for 2008, showed that EU member states are well off track towards reaching their collective targets of spending 0.56% of Gross National Income by 2010.

- Ireland's aid promise has a long and varied history:
  - 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.
  - In the 2006 White Paper on Irish Aid, the government declared that development cooperation was an integral part, a “central plank”, of Ireland's foreign policy. In the White Paper, the government said that the “overarching objective” of our development cooperation efforts is to reduce poverty, to reduce vulnerability and increase opportunity.
  - In September last year, and indeed in January this year, Taoiseach Brian Cowen reiterated our “solemn” promise. In his response to Pope Benedict's new year's message, the Taoiseach said:

*“I welcome the commitments made in the Declaration that issued at the Doha Conference in December and note that, despite serious economic difficulties, Ireland remains on course to achieve the target of spending 0.7 per cent of GNP on Overseas Development Aid. In this time of global economic crisis, His Holiness' message is a timely reminder of the obligation that we in the developed world have to assist those in greater need. Poverty destroys human potential, increases vulnerability and limits opportunity. We must ensure that progress already made is safeguarded and that commitments made in fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals do not falter.”*

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, SEE WWW.DOCHAS.IE**

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**The Dóchas report on how the global crisis is impacting on the world's poorest countries is entitled "Now is not the time to turn our backs to the poor", and is available at**

**[http://www.dochas.ie/documents/Dochas\\_on\\_Global\\_Crisis-March09.pdf](http://www.dochas.ie/documents/Dochas_on_Global_Crisis-March09.pdf)**

**Examples of how Irish Development NGOs are working to reduce world poverty can be found at [http://www.dochas.ie/making\\_poverty\\_history\\_together.htm](http://www.dochas.ie/making_poverty_history_together.htm)**

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](http://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