

## **Academics call on Government to respect its development commitments**

In a letter published in the Irish Times, Academics called on the government to respect its international development commitments and at the very least to maintain the official aid programme at its current level in the forthcoming budget.

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### **The letter as published in the Irish Times:**

#### **Cuts to development aid**

Mon, Oct 26, 2009

Madam, – Ireland has in recent years established itself as a generous donor in the field of international development, and its aid programme has been widely lauded for its effectiveness and its focus on hunger and poverty reduction in some of the world's poorest countries.

However, Ireland is now reneging on its promises and is in danger of undoing the good work and good international reputation it has achieved.

In 2008, the Government spent €920.6 million on official development assistance (ODA), or overseas aid. The budget has been reduced to €696 million in 2009, a cut of more than 24 per cent in our commitment to some of the world's poorest countries.

While recognising that difficult decisions have to be taken within the current economic climate, the cuts to the official aid budget have been particularly severe and disproportionate, with serious consequences for Ireland's contribution to poverty reduction.

Life-saving programmes in areas such as water and sanitation, primary healthcare and nutrition have already been curtailed and many successful initiatives are set to be discontinued.

The possibility of even further cuts is creating enormous uncertainty for development and relief organisations and overseas partners trying to plan their work, at a time when poverty and vulnerability are growing dramatically. This is not just a cause of concern for government or political parties, but for the entire country, as it says much about the values we espouse as a society.

As individual academics involved in and concerned about development research and teaching, we are calling on the Government to respect its international development commitments and at the very least to maintain the official aid programme at its current level in the forthcoming budget. – Yours, etc,

FIONA MEEHAN, Lecturer, Kimmage Development Studies Centre (KDSC), Dublin 12;  
Dr ADEBOLA ADEDIMEJI, TCD;  
Dr BARBARA BRADBY, TCD;  
Dr EAMONN BREHONY, KDSC;  
TOM CAMPBELL, KDSC;  
Dr PADRAIG CARMODY, TCD;  
Dr FRANCESCO CAVATORTA, DCU;  
Dr NICK CHISHOLM, UCD;  
Dr EILEEN CONNOLLY, DCU;  
Prof PEADAR CREMIN, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick;  
Dr MAURA CRONIN, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick;  
Dr PATRICK DAVEY, Mountains of the Moon University, Uganda;  
Prof JIM DEEGAN, UL;  
Dr ANNE DOLAN, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick;  
Dr GERARD DOWNES, UL;  
Prof MARTIN J DOWNES, NUI Maynooth;  
Dr HONOR FAGAN, NUI Maynooth;  
Dr JIM GLEESON, UL;  
Dr ROSARII GRIFFIN, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick;  
Dr BERNIE GRUMMELL, NUI Maynooth;  
DEIRDRE HEALY, KDSC;  
Dr SU-MING KHOO, NUI Galway;  
ANNE KINSELLA, KDSC;  
Dr JIM KINSELLA, UCD;  
Prof PEADAR KIRBY, University of Limerick;  
Dr EDWARD LAHIFF, TCD;  
Dr JAMES LOUGHMAN, DIT;  
PATRICK MARREN, KDSC;  
Dr CHANDANA MATHUR, NUI Maynooth;  
Prof ALAN MATTHEWS, TCD;  
FIONA MEEHAN, KDSC;  
Prof JIM PHELAN, UCD;  
PADDY REILLY, KDSC;  
BRENDAN RIORDAN, Consultant;  
Dr HELEN SHERIDAN, TCD;  
Dr ANDY STOREY, UCD;  
Dr RIK VAN NIEUWENHOVE; Mary Immaculate College, Limerick.