

Mr Brian Cowen TD  
Taoiseach  
Government Buildings  
Dublin 2

28 March 2009

# We must keep our promise to the world's poorest people

Dear Taoiseach,

In the coming days, you and your colleagues will be making some very difficult decisions. If they are to be acceptable to the Irish public, those decisions must be guided by the principles of fairness and equity.

**We write to you, on behalf of over 1,000,000 supporters in Ireland, to urge you to apply these principles in protecting the world's poorest people from a crisis they did not create.**

Ireland's overseas aid makes real and positive differences to the lives of millions of people across the developing world. Our aid programme is recognised internationally for its quality and its focus on the world's poorest and most vulnerable communities. Aid from Ireland embodies our commitment to fairness and equity. Ireland's pledges on overseas aid are made as a percentage of our national income. As the economy contracts, our overseas aid also contracts.

However, over the last 8 months, the Government has gone beyond this built-in reduction and cut the overseas aid budget three times, by the equivalent of 17% of the original budget for 2009. This is a far deeper cut than has been incurred in any other area of public spending to date. Moreover, those cuts will have a direct and immediate impact on the poorest people on earth. The World Bank predicts that up to 400,000 more children a year may die if the global economic crisis persists.

**Taoiseach, in recognition of the significant cuts already made, we urge you to ensure that the overseas aid budget is protected from further cuts.**

Since 2005, you have stood by Ireland's solemn promise to contribute 0.7% of our national income – just 70 cent in every 100 euro – to overseas aid by 2012. In standing by this promise, you have given credence to Ireland's reputation as a committed donor and held the respect of the international community. The coming days present us with the opportunity to show the world that, as a nation, we keep our word. Ireland understands that no country can get out of this crisis without the help of others.

**We urge you not to turn our backs on the world's poorest people.**

Yours sincerely,

ActionAid Ireland  
Afrl  
Africa Centre  
Aidlink  
Amawele  
Amnesty International Ireland  
Bóthar  
Burma Action Ireland  
Camara  
Centre for Global Education  
ChildFund Ireland  
Children in Crossfire  
Children of The Caucus – The Next Step  
Christian Aid Ireland  
Church Mission Society Ireland  
Comber  
Comhlámh  
Concern Worldwide  
Debt and Development Coalition Ireland  
Development Perspectives  
Disabled Peoples' International  
Dóchas

Electric Aid  
Friends of Londiani (Ireland)  
Galway One World Centre  
Gorta  
International Service Ireland  
Irish League of Credit Unions Foundation  
Irish Commission for Justice and Social Affairs  
Irish Congress of Trade Unions  
Irish Council for International Students  
Irish Family Planning Association  
Irish Foundation for Cooperative Development  
Irish Missionary Union  
Irish Red Cross  
Kerry Action for Development Education  
Livability Ireland  
Misean Cara  
Moldova Vision  
National Youth Council of Ireland  
Nepal Leprosy Trust (Ireland)  
Niall Mellon Township Trust  
Oxfam Ireland  
Plan Ireland

Progressio Ireland  
Seachange Foundation  
SEEDS One World Centre Derry  
Self Help Africa  
Sightsavers International Ireland  
Skillshare International Ireland  
Suas Educational Development  
Tearfund Ireland  
The Hope Foundation  
The ONE Campaign  
The Nepalese Children's Foundation  
TOUCH Ireland  
Transparency International Ireland  
Trócaire  
Value Added in Africa  
Vita  
Voluntary Service International  
Voluntary Service Overseas  
Volunteer Missionary Movement  
War on Want Northern Ireland  
Wingspread International  
World Vision Ireland