



Dóchas Briefing Paper

International Development and Humanitarian Action in a Time of COVID-19

DECEMBER 2020

dóchas

The Irish Association
of Non-Governmental
Development Organisations

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12. The National Council of Ireland YMCA Trust

Developed with input from the Dóchas Policy Working Group, December 2020. For further information about any of the topics in the paper, please contact Louise Finan, Head of Programme and Policy, Dóchas at louise@dochas.ie.

Cover Image:

Patrick Ghembo of Monyo Village, Malawi. Photos taken 12 months apart. Cyclone Idai destroyed his farm and forced him and his wife to higher ground. With the help of an Irish INGO, he is back planting on his land again. He is even able to higher local farmers to help him.

Photo: Gavin Douglas/Concern Worldwide

Introduction

Dóchas is the national association of international development NGOs based in Ireland. Dóchas members work on a wide range of international humanitarian and development responses in the Global South. The Dóchas network is made up of over 47 incredibly dedicated Irish organizations working on the ground, day in day out, in over 104 countries. Over 5,000 people work in the sector in Ireland and thousands more are employed globally. All of these organisations work to deliver aspects of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and further Ireland's international development policy 'A Better World' in leaving no one behind, and reaching the furthest behind first.

Context overview

COVID-19 threatens to roll back the development gains so hard-won by the most marginalised communities across the world. The global recession is increasing rates of hunger and poverty. We are at a time of unprecedented global need. A record 168 million people already required humanitarian assistance across 53 countries at the beginning of 2020, pre-COVID.¹ By October 2020, the number of people in need globally had more than doubled to 433 million, across 63 countries². These needs span health, food and nutrition, shelter, WASH, education and protection. Just under \$40 billion is now needed to address the spectrum of needs, but so far only \$15 billion USD – or 38% of total requirements – has been funded, leaving a gap of 62%. For 2021, the UN estimates that 235 million people will need humanitarian assistance and protection. This number has risen to 1 in 33 people worldwide - a significant increase from 1 in 45 at the start of 2020.

Sustainable Development Goals

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs or 'Global Goals') were adopted by all UN member states in 2015 as a global pledge to end poverty and hunger, ensure good health, eliminate gender and other inequalities, protect the environment and to ensure peace and prosperity for all by 2030. The SDGs commit to reach the "furthest behind first" and to leave no-one in the global community behind.

After five years, we are seriously off-track to reach the Global Goals by 2030. Ireland tracks its progress here: <https://irelandsdg.geohive.ie/>. Coalition2030, an Irish alliance of over 75 organisations, including Dóchas, also monitors SDG progress here: <https://www.ireland2030.org/>

1 OCHA, Global Humanitarian Needs Overview 2020, https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/GHO-2020_v9.1.pdf

2 OCHA, Global Humanitarian Overview 2020 Monthly Funding Update, 31 October 2020, https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/GHO_Monthly_Update_31OCT2020.pdf

Poverty

The latest World Bank estimates from 2015 state that 10% of the world's population – 736 million at that time - were living in extreme poverty, below the \$1.90 international poverty line³. However, according to former UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Philip Alston, this official poverty line is a flawed measure of extreme poverty that does not afford an adequate standard of living globally.⁴ As such, the true and current figure of those living in poverty is likely to be much higher. Alston reported that “extreme poverty is not being eradicated”.

The International Labour Organisation's (ILO) data projects that COVID-19 alone will push an additional 70 million people into extreme poverty, and hundreds of millions more into unemployment and poverty⁵. New data from UN Women and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) also expects to see the pandemic widening the poverty gap between women and men, pushing 47 million additional women and girls below the poverty line which in effect will reverse decades of progress.⁶ At the beginning of September 2020, the UN projected the poverty rate among women would increase by 9.1% because of the pandemic and its fallout.⁷

Hunger

Global hunger, which includes undernourishment as well as undernutrition, has been rising since 2015, with 690 million people “hungry” at the beginning of 2019.⁸ This means that roughly 8.9% of the world's population are hungry today. Although Asia has the highest number of hungry people, Africa is disproportionately affected per population, and by 2030 it is projected that the number of hungry people in Africa will rise to 433 million, of which 412 million will be in sub-Saharan countries. As of October 2020, WFP have warned that 4 countries are now at risk of imminent famine: Yemen, Burkina Faso, South Sudan, and Northeastern Nigeria.

Prior to COVID-19, 135 million people were already acutely food insecure, across 55 food crises globally. The World Food Programme (WFP) predicts that the number of acutely food insecure people could double to 265 million by 2020 as a result of COVID-19, as already unequal and inefficient food systems and supply chains, as well as livelihoods, education and remittance flows continue to be disrupted.

According to the 2020 Global Humanitarian Needs Overview and the 2020 Global Report on Food Crises, factors such as conflict, climate events and weather extremes, along with economic turbulence, are now recognised as current key drivers of hunger.⁹ Currently, most of the world's worst food crises are unfolding in countries plagued by both conflict and climate shocks including Yemen, DRC, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Syria, Sudan, and Northern Nigeria. Indeed, in 2019, conflict pushed 77 million people into food insecurity globally, while climate crisis pushed a further 34 million into food insecurity.

3 World Bank, Poverty Overview, 16 April 2020: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/overview>

4 Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights (Philip Alston): The Parlous State of Poverty Eradication, 2 July 2020.

5 Ibid.

6 <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/8/press-release-covid-19-will-widen-poverty-gap-between-women-and-men>

7 <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/gender-equality-in-the-wake-of-covid-19-en.pdf?la=en&vs=5142>

8 Global Hunger Index 2020; State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020 (SOFI Report) 2020

9 Global Humanitarian Overview 2020; FSIN, Global Report on Food Crises, 2020.

Throughout 2020, East Africa was at the epicentre of the worst desert locust infestation in 70 years, devastating crops and livelihoods. Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and Uganda were among the affected countries.

Globally, over 3 billion people cannot afford a healthy diet, the cost of which is higher than the international poverty line. In 2020, 144 million children (21.6%) under the age of five are stunted and 47 million (6.9%) are wasted.¹⁰ It is estimated that 10,000 more children could die from malnutrition every month in 2020 due to COVID-19.¹¹ Malnutrition in all its forms costs the global economy as much as \$3.5 trillion USD per year. We are currently off track to reach Zero Hunger (SDG2) by 2030 and need urgent action to get us back on track.



Irish NGOs are working in locations that are increasingly impacted by more frequent and longer droughts, and more heavy rainfall and flooding, which wreaks havoc on growing seasons and doing untold damage to farmland and crops. In Tanzania, Irish NGOs support greenhouse horticulture and irrigation to help communities adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change and enable them to grow crops during periods of drought. Anna James holds tomato seedlings outside a greenhouse.

Photo Bill Marwa

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¹⁰ Stunting is when a child is too short for their age, and wasting is when a child is too thin for their height. UNICEF/WHO/The World Bank, Joint Child Malnutrition Estimates 2020 – Key Findings: <https://www.who.int/publications-detail/jme-2020-edition>

¹¹ The Lancet: Impacts of COVID-19 on childhood malnutrition and nutrition-related mortality, 2020 [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(20\)31647-0/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)31647-0/fulltext)

Inequality and Livelihoods

The current economic system has concentrated power and wealth in the hands of a few, it is estimated that 2,153 billionaires have more wealth than 4.6 billion people who make up 60% of the planet's population¹². The response to spiralling inequalities has been woefully inadequate, continuing instead to promote extractive economic models that serve narrow interests, to the detriment of the sustainability of this planet and the welfare of its people, and in particular the poorest and most marginalised. Many economies are unable to absorb the large numbers of young people seeking jobs. Lack of opportunity is forcing millions into non-standard and poorly regulated forms of work and less secure livelihoods. Informal workers, including the growing number in the “gig” economy, have no guaranteed benefits or living wage. There is growing consensus that a model driven by the pursuit of unsustainable economic growth and consumption, especially where it is not inclusive, is not sufficient to reduce poverty.



Mestawat Sorsa, pictured above, has been supported by Irish NGOs to start a grain milling business, and has since acquired a donkey, a cow, and a sheep, and carried out major improvements to the family home, including new windows, doors, and furniture. She plans to buy an ox.

Photo: Stefanie Glinski

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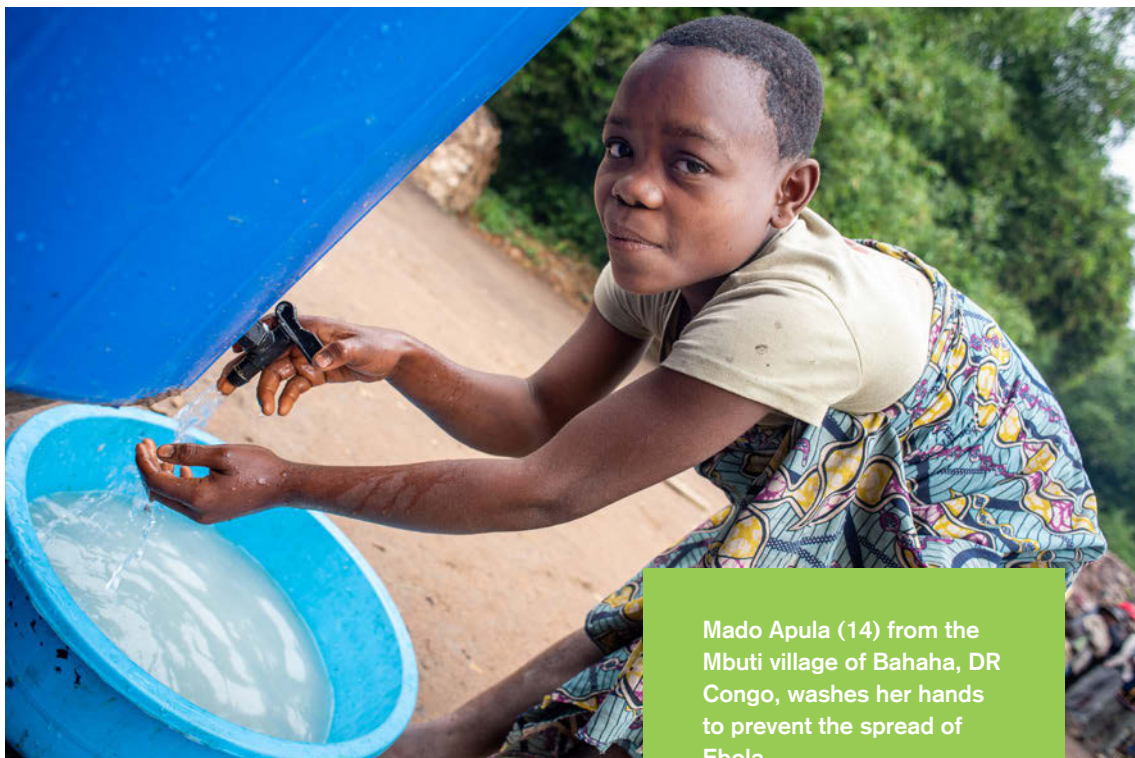
12 <https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/time-care> (January 2020)

Health

COVID-19 has overwhelmed and stretched even the most well-resourced health systems in the world. In the world's poorest countries where health systems are chronically underfunded and understaffed, it presents huge challenges¹³. Public health systems will require significant support to ensure they can continue to provide the services and treatments their communities need.

At the top of the resource spectrum, Europe and North America averages five hospital beds per 1,000 people, while at the bottom, sub-Saharan Africa has on average just 0.8 hospital beds per 1,000 people. With resources diverted to fighting the pandemic, and people fearful of seeking routine medical care and worrying about financial pressures, many are neglecting other health-related concerns. It is estimated that vaccine coverage has been rolled back by 25 years in just 25 weeks¹⁴.

UN Women's rapid gender assessment surveys show that in 4 out of 10 countries in Europe and Central Asia, at least half of women in need of family planning services have experienced major difficulty accessing them since the pandemic began. In Asia and the Pacific, 60% of women report facing more barriers to seeing a doctor as a result of the pandemic. Although data and studies are still limited, early evidence indicates that COVID-19 has both direct and indirect effects on maternal mortality, with some estimates as high as 56,700 additional maternal deaths¹⁵.



Mado Apula (14) from the Mbuti village of Bahaha, DR Congo, washes her hands to prevent the spread of Ebola.

Photo: Garry Walsh

13 <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/climate-change-and-health>

14 <https://www.gatesfoundation.org/goalkeepers/report/2020-report/#GlobalPerspective>

15 <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/gender-equality-in-the-wake-of-covid-19-en.pdf?la=en&vs=5142>

Climate Action

Climate change is having a devastating impact on the poorest people in the world, increasing poverty and inequality, food insecurity and water stress. Developing countries will bear an estimated 75% of the cost of the climate crisis, despite the fact that the poorest half of the world's population are responsible for just 10% of historical carbon emissions¹⁶. The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that between 2030 and 2050, climate change will cause approximately 250,000 additional deaths per year from malnutrition, malaria, diarrhoea, and heat-stress; diseases that are highly sensitive to climatic conditions.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) set out unequivocally that the planet will face severe consequences if we fail to limit global greenhouse gas emissions to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.¹⁷ Beyond the 1.5°C limit, the direct and indirect impacts of climate change would be catastrophic and increasingly unpredictable for all of us, but the poorest will suffer most. Despite the warnings of the IPCC, current national commitments are projected to lead to warming of approximately 3°C. The IPCC have called for a reduction of 50% in global emissions by 2030, achieving net zero globally by 2050. Ireland can also engage in targeted climate diplomacy on the international stage, to ensure our global partners honour their commitments to reduce emissions. But in order to retain its own credibility in this regard, Ireland must work to improve its own image as a “climate laggard¹⁸” globally. As a rich country with a high level of responsibility per capita for historical and current emissions, Ireland has a responsibility to cut emissions in half in advance of 2030, achieving net zero in advance of 2050. Increasing support to the poorest countries to enable them to take action through the provision of climate finance is also necessary if global climate goals are to be achieved.

It is therefore crucial that Ireland adheres to our own mitigation commitments under the Paris Agreement¹⁹ as well as supporting adaptation initiatives by Irish NGOs and others, in countries that are currently experiencing the most negative impacts of climate change already.



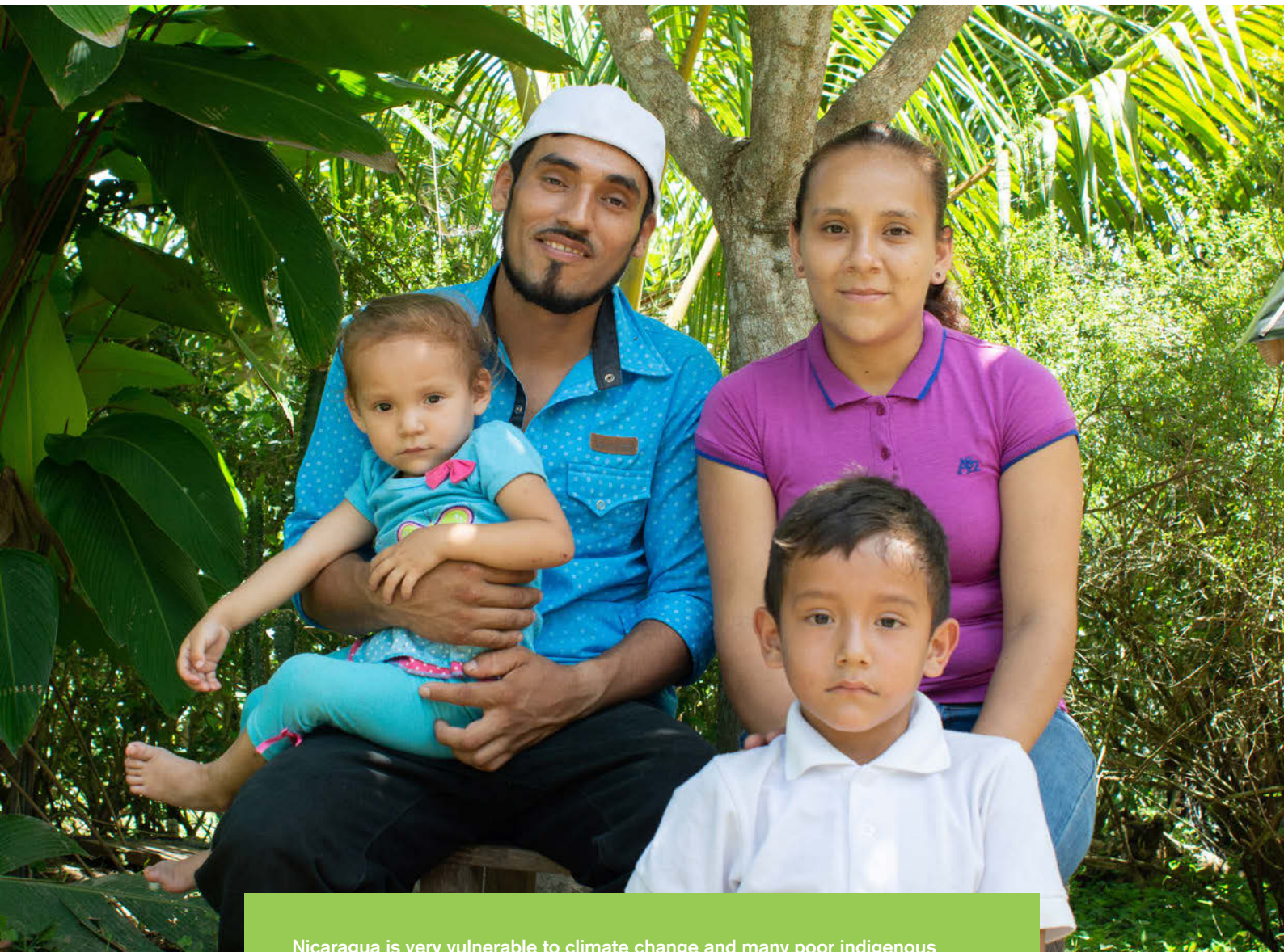
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16 Alston, P. (2019) 'Climate Change and Poverty: Report of the Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights'.

17 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, (2018) 'An IPCC Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty'.

18 <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/environment/cop25-ireland-likely-to-be-identified-as-a-climate-laggard-1.4098197>

19 See: <https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/428b3c-eu-and-international-climate-action/#:~:text=Ireland%20will%20contribute%20to%20the,or%20updated%20NDCs%20in%202020>.



Nicaragua is very vulnerable to climate change and many poor indigenous farmers are struggling to grow enough crops to make a decent standard of living. Everth and Selena, pictured above, have been supported by Irish NGOs to adopt a new approach to their farm, which has completely transformed their fortunes. Everth and Selena began to implement organic and sustainable approaches. Agro-ecology is an alternative way of farming that makes the best use of nature's goods while not damaging these resources. Everth and Selena Castro with their children Hellen (2) and Everth (6).

Photo: Giulia Vuillermoz

Gender

Despite the enormous contributions women have made to mitigating the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the crisis is threatening to erase decades of progress for women and girls. While men have been most affected in terms of fatalities, COVID-19 has exacerbated economic crises, care deficits and the 'shadow pandemic' of gender-based violence, all of which disproportionately impacts on women.

It is well documented that girls and women are excessively hard-hit in emergencies. Girls and women, especially those from marginalised communities and with disabilities, are at great risk, more specifically when it comes to the secondary impacts of the outbreak due to their age, gender and other exclusionary factors. As families, communities and the economy face extreme stress and pressure, girls and women are at increased risk of gender-based violence (GBV) including: sexual exploitation and abuse; child, early and forced marriage (CEFM); unplanned pregnancy; and increasing domestic care responsibilities. The UN Population Fund (UNFPA) has issued a sober warning on the impact of COVID-19 and predicts a staggering 31 million additional cases of gender-based violence because of lockdown measures globally²⁰, and an additional 13 million child marriages could take place globally between 2020-2030 due to COVID-19.²¹

In July 2020 the McKinsey Global Institute reported that the crisis made women's jobs 1.8 times more vulnerable than men's, but if action on gender equality was taken now \$13 trillion (£10tn) could be added to global GDP over the next decade.²² Measures to curb the disease have magnified existing inequalities with school closures that will disproportionately affect adolescent girls who faced gender and age specific barriers to their education pre-COVID-19, and are at the highest risk of dropping out, while cutting them off from essential health and protection services and social networks. COVID-19 responses must address gender inequality including gender transformative responses to build back better and more equal. Investing in women and girls in the recovery represents a significant opportunity to improve gender equality and drive inclusive economic growth.



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20 <https://www.unfpa.org/news/millions-more-cases-violence-child-marriage-female-genital-mutilation-unintended-pregnancies>

21 UNFPA (May 2020), Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Family Planning and Ending Gender Based Violence, Female Genital Mutilation and Child Marriage, https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/COVID-19_impact_brief_for_UNFPA_24_April_2020_1.pdf

22 <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/future-of-work/covid-19-and-gender-equality-countering-the-regressive-effects#>



Girls and young women in the Azraq Refugee camp in Jordan have been distributing sanitised handicraft kits and inviting other girls and women to join group call sessions on how to make masks. Young women in the camp have also been leading and implementing parenting, life skills, literacy and youth club sessions using social media. Girls in Youth Committees have helped facilitate online life skills sessions for children that highlight important issues.

"Since the start of the pandemic many things have changed. I stayed at home much more than I am used to. I felt isolated, but some things kept me occupied. Like staying in touch with others girls by borrowing my mother's mobile phone to join WhatsApp sessions." Shayma's, 16, Azraq refugee camp.

Disability

The COVID-19 pandemic is impacting societies at their very core, deepening pre-existing inequalities. Even under normal circumstances, one billion persons with disabilities worldwide are less likely to access education, healthcare and livelihoods or to participate and be included in the community — a situation which is further exacerbated for those living in humanitarian and fragile contexts. They are more likely to live in poverty, and experience higher rates of violence, neglect and abuse²³. Ensuring an inclusive response to COVID-19 to ensure no-one will be left behind, including those living with disabilities is vitally important.

Education

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused the largest disruption of education in history. Most governments around the world have temporarily closed schools and other learning spaces in recent months in an attempt to contain the spread of the virus. At the peak of the pandemic in April 2020, these nationwide closures impacted more than 1.5 billion students, or over 90% of the world's student population, from pre-primary to higher education in 200 countries.²⁴ This unprecedented disruption to education has the potential to roll back substantial gains made on education in recent decades, with broader immediate and longer-term effects on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, including those related to poverty reduction, health and well-being, inclusive quality education and gender equality. The most marginalised, including girls, children with disabilities, those in conflict-affected contexts, remote and rural communities and those in the poorest quintile, are expected to be most affected by COVID-related school closures, facing additional constraints on their ability to fulfil their right to education, health and protection, among other rights.

Ensuring continuity of learning and preventing the permanent exit from education for millions of children, especially girls, will depend upon longer-term approaches that aim to build back stronger, gender-responsive and resilient systems that are prepared for future shocks, stresses and school closures. Such planning must be approached with a long-term perspective that prioritises equitable access, community mobilisation and engagement and efforts to ensure no one is left behind.



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23 <https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus/disability-inclusion>

24 UNESCO. 2020. Global Monitoring of School Closures Caused by COVID-19. Paris, UNESCO.



In Uganda, where many marginalised communities have no voice, Irish NGOs, with the support of local partners, have been training young people - like Mercy Ocotoco and Chris Osooti, pictured above - to lead the way in the areas of governance, lobbying and advocacy. It has resulted in young leaders making the voices of their communities heard in decision-making forums, and enabling these young people to influence local governments to address issues such as teen pregnancy, child marriage and services for people with disabilities (PWD).

The vital role of investment in International Development

Official Development Assistance (ODA), often referred to as overseas aid, is defined as “government aid that promotes and specifically targets the economic development and welfare of developing countries”²⁵. It encompasses a government’s contribution to both longer-term development cooperation and shorter-term humanitarian aid.

Development aid can be bilateral – transferred directly from the donor country to the beneficiary country; or it can be multilateral – donor State contributions to international organisations and non-governmental development organisations.

Longer-term development cooperation responses can include financial assistance, capacity support and policy change initiatives.²⁶ Examples of longer-term development cooperation would include capacity support to local and national governments on adopting sustainable food security and nutrition strategies, or in supporting communities to build resilience to climate events like floods. Policy Coherence for Development recognises that government policies in one area (for example trade, tax or climate action) can have consequences for developing countries. The principle of progressing PCD is enshrined in Article 208 of the Lisbon Treaty, which commits EU member states to consider development cooperation objectives when implementing policies that may impact them.

25 OECD, Official Development Assistance, at: <https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/official-development-assistance.htm>

26 UN ECOSOC, 2016 Development Cooperation Policy Briefs, February 2015: https://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/newfunc/pdf15/2016_dcf_policy_brief_no.1.pdf

Humanitarian assistance refers to more urgent and immediate responses to emergencies and crises, such as conflicts and natural disasters.²⁷ However, humanitarian assistance should also be seen as a step towards longer-term development, and should seek to build resilience and strengthen preparedness for future shocks and facilitate a return to normal lives and livelihoods²⁸.

Examples of humanitarian assistance include emergency responses in Syria, the global response to COVID-19 in the most at-risk countries²⁹, as well as the responses to the recent explosions in Beirut, Lebanon.

For an overview of the global humanitarian coordination structure, please see <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/about-clusters/who-does-what>.

All 37 OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) member states, including Ireland, have long-since committed to contributing 0.7% of their national GNI towards ODA. Ireland contributed 0.32% of its GNI towards ODA in 2019, spending €869m.

Ireland's Official Development Assistance

Ireland has a strong track-record in providing high-quality and impactful Official Development Assistance. Ireland's ODA and humanitarian response programme began in 1974 (following on NGO and missionary initiatives) as an integral part of our foreign policy, allowing Ireland to contribute to the reduction of global poverty. Irish support now stretches across the world, including fragile and conflict-affected contexts, giving us a significant presence and footprint.

Dóchas members ensure these funds make a very real impact on the ground. Irish NGOs employ over 5000 people in Ireland and many more globally, supporting local communities in over 100 countries across the world. They are active on the full range of issues, from poverty-reduction, health, education, hunger and nutrition, to humanitarian response and peace-building, to business and human rights, economic empowerment; to gender equality and working with people with disabilities, and to climate justice.

'A Better World' sets out Ireland's development policy priority areas: gender equality, reducing humanitarian needs, climate action, and strengthening governance. The three priority areas for response action include: protection, food and people.

27 The United Nations Office Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) defines humanitarian assistance as: "Aid that seeks to save lives and alleviate suffering of a crisis-affected population. Humanitarian assistance must be provided in accordance with the basic humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality and neutrality, as stated in general Assembly Resolution 46/182. In addition, the UN seeks to provide humanitarian assistance with full respect for the sovereignty of States. Assistance may be divided into three categories – direct assistance, indirect assistance and infrastructure support – which have diminishing degrees of contact with the affected population".

28 Principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship, Principle 1, endorsed in Stockholm, 17 June 2003 by Germany, Australia, Belgium, Canada, the EC, Denmark, the US, Finland, France, Ireland, Japan, Luxembourg, Norway, the Netherlands, the UK, Sweden and Switzerland; SIDA, Our Fields of Work: Humanitarian Aid, available at: <http://www.sida.se/English/how-we-work/our-fields-of-work/Humanitarian-aid/>.

29 https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/GHRP-COVID19_July_update_0.pdf

On 20th May 2020, the OECD DAC (Development Assistance Committee) published its latest peer review of Ireland's development cooperation . The report determined that Ireland's programme was "strong, with many areas of excellence", and that Ireland "walks the talk" in prioritising the furthest behind and is "a leading advocate for multilateralism". It recognised that while Ireland is making some progress towards issues of policy coherence for development "domestic action against climate change remains a key challenge".

Key recommendations from the DAC Peer Review include that Ireland should "develop and implement a comprehensive plan that identifies how to grow spending... in order increase its ODA budget and meet its international commitment of 0.7% of GNI by 2030", and that Ireland should "develop mechanisms for analysing the impact of its domestic policies on developing countries, identify potential inconsistencies, discuss action to address these with all stakeholders, and ensure sector, informed by values of equality, diversity, sustainability and human rights and responsibilities. In that progress is monitored".

Development Education is an integral element of Ireland's development approach. It is a life-long educational process which enables people to understand the world around them and to act to transform it. As a process, Development Education works to tackle the root causes of injustice and inequality, globally and locally, to create a more just and sustainable future for everyone. In its recent Development Assistance Committee report, the OECD noted that "Ireland has received international recognition for its development education strategies". Development Education has the potential to bring about large-scale positive societal change to create a just, equal and sustainable society and fulfil the commitments of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

What can TDs and Senators do?

- i) Support policy action in the following areas:
 - **Maintain** Ireland's existing investments in Official Development Assistance (ODA), which is projected to be €867m in 2021, and continue the momentum to reach the target of spending 0.7% of GNI on ODA. Investing in ODA is central to a robust foreign policy that supports multilateralism, the Sustainable Development Goals, civil society space, and equal opportunities.
 - **Commit** to responding to both COVID-19 and pre-existing humanitarian needs: ensure appropriate levels of humanitarian funding and meet Grand Bargain commitments including respect and support for local needs and leadership. Support the call to end ongoing conflicts and protect international humanitarian law, using Ireland's seat at the Security Council and other diplomatic channels, including its missions, and at EU, UN and Geneva fora.
 - **Support** the implementation of Ireland's International Development Policy, 'A Better World', to ensure Ireland's quality aid programme quickly adapts to the changing context presented by the pandemic, and delivers on the Sustainable Development Goals and its international obligations on climate action and gender equality.
 - **Support** the full, coordinated cancellation of all bilateral, multilateral and private sovereign debt repayments due in 2020 and 2021, from low- and middle-income countries, and influence the policies of multilateral development banks, including the World Bank, the African Development Bank and Asia Development Bank.
- ii) Actively engage in the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, supporting action on the above priorities (including monitoring the implementation of the Irish government's international development policy, 'A Better World') with a particular focus on building back better, greener, and for a more equal and resilient society.
- iii) Use your public platform to champion important issues and show support for ODA.
- iv) Advocate that all – or at least 85% - of new projects or programmes funded by Ireland's ODA should have gender equality as a principal or significant objective. Of this 85%, at least 20% of programmes should have gender equality as a principal objective, to ensure that specific actions are properly resourced, complementing gender mainstreaming, in line with the EU Gender Action Plan.
- v) Understand that protection of women and girls is fundamentally linked to food and economic insecurity, ensure that Irish Aid's focus on protection in 'A Better World' addressed the particular protection risks for women and girls that are exacerbated in the current global pandemic. Fast-track Ireland's commitment to create a new funding initiative for women's economic empowerment in response to the devastating economic impact of Covid-19 among the world's most vulnerable. Move forward on the commitment in 'A Better World' to establish a new initiative on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).

Developed with input from the Dóchas Policy Working Group, December 2020. For further information about any of the topics in the paper, please contact Louise Finan, Head of Programme and Policy, Dóchas at louise@dochas.ie.