

Lives on the Line

Dóchas Pre-Budget 2026
Submission

dóchas

The Irish Association
of Non-Governmental
Development Organisations

Introduction

Dóchas is the Irish network for International Development and Humanitarian Organisations. We connect, strengthen and represent 55 international NGOs who have a shared vision of a just, sustainable and equal world.

The world is in crisis. Global needs and extreme poverty are escalating and increasingly concentrated in countries where we see a convergence of conflict and climate change. At the very moment these needs are rising, international donor funding is sharply declining, forcing difficult choices about who receives assistance. Now is a critical moment for Ireland to lead and demonstrate our core values of promoting peace, human rights, sustainable development and principled humanitarian assistance.

Today, more than 300 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance and protection, and a record 120 million people are displaced. One in every five children in the world – approximately 400 million – is living in or fleeing conflict zones,¹ with women and girls bearing the brunt of violence, displacement and health emergencies. With global temperatures expected to remain at or near record levels over the next five years,² the impacts of climate change on livelihoods and food systems, and its contribution to increasing vulnerabilities globally, are increasingly apparent.

As the world faces growing hunger, violence and death by preventable illness, aid programmes are being dismantled. In 2024, the world faced a US\$25 billion gap between funds required for United Nations (UN) appeals and funds received.³ This gap is now set to more than double as United States (US) and European donors slash their Official Development Assistance (ODA) budgets. The impact of the cuts on affected populations is devastating. For example, aid cuts have strongly impacted women-led organisations, many of whom will close in 2025, threatening essential life-saving services in gender-based violence (GBV) response, protection and healthcare for women and girls.⁴ This comes at a time when progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is critically off track, with only 17% of SDG targets on course to be met.

At a time of geopolitical unrest, the destabilising effects of conflict, hunger, displacement and aid cuts must be met with sustainable, transformative solutions. Ireland has an opportunity to position itself as a progressive leader through our principled approach to development, humanitarian assistance, climate justice and the upholding of international law. Our increased diplomatic presence, our role in developing the SDGs and our role in protecting humanitarian principles at the UN Security Council, have strengthened our reputation as an island at the centre of

1 UN Global Humanitarian Overview 2025, December 2024.

2 World Meteorological Organization (WMO) Global Annual to Decadal Climate Update (2025–2029) (<https://wmo.int/publication-series/wmo-global-annual-decadal-climate-update-2025-2029?access-token=pNLbdBu8q2rFHbkLrdh9YE5cold58lc7lc47kQiUg4U>)

3 UN Global Humanitarian Overview 2025, December 2024.

4 UN Women, 'At a breaking point: The impact of foreign aid cuts on women's organizations in humanitarian crises worldwide', April 2025 (<https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2025-05/at-a-breaking-point-the-impact-of-foreign-aid-cuts-on-womens-organizations-in-humanitarian-crises-worldwide-en.pdf>)

the world, with a broad mind and a strong independent voice that promotes the values and principles of a rules-based, multilateral system.

There needs to be a strong voice in Europe that focuses on sustaining peace and protecting the most vulnerable globally. Ireland is that voice, and now we must leverage its role as a bridge builder and demonstrate a different approach to peace and security – one that is built on a progressive policy of sustainable development and the promotion of human rights and justice. Ireland's upcoming Presidency of the European Council and our participation in the G20, present an opportunity to champion global solidarity, justice, the respect for human rights and adherence to international law, and, critically, to advocate for the retention of international development and humanitarian aid – promoting it as an investment in global security and prosperity.

Our values must be matched by our commitments and our ability to deliver on them. The Government of Ireland must uphold its commitment to the furthest behind around the world, and continue to increase Official Development Assistance (ODA) spent overseas in its annual budget, to realise our target of 0.7% of gross national income (GNI) in ODA by 2030.⁵ In the forthcoming budget, we encourage the Government to go a step further, accelerate progress to reach the targets it has set, and work more closely with civil society actors and organisations on the ground.

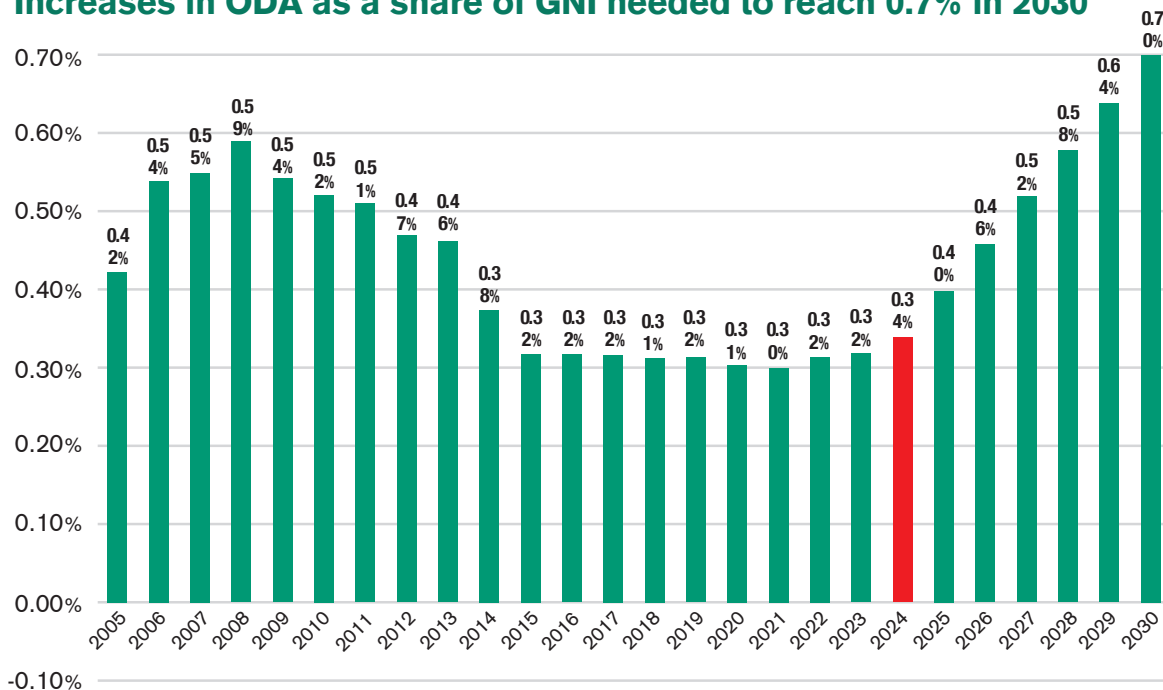
Ireland should fulfil its commitment to increase funding to the development, humanitarian and climate budgets, and account for any costs incurred in responding to the needs of refugees in Ireland, while much needed, as additional expenditure.

Recommendations for Irish Government in Budget 2026

- Make real progress to realise our commitment of 0.7% GNI on ODA spent overseas by 2030 by increasing the ODA budget in 2026 by €300 million and publish a pathway to achieve this.
- Increase Ireland's climate finance to our 'fair share' of €500 million.
- Provide at least 30% of Ireland's ODA to and through civil society across humanitarian, development and climate programmes and funding.

⁵ Programme for Government 2025 – Securing Ireland's Future (<https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/programme-for-government-securing-irelands-future.pdf>)

Increases in ODA as a share of GNI needed to reach 0.7% in 2030



Source: 2015 to 2024 OECD Data Explorer, DAC 1. 2025 to 2030. 2025 to 2030 based on linear growth in the percentage of GNI spent on ODA excluding spending on refugees in Ireland from 0.34% in 2024 to 0.7% in 2030

Enhancing our Overseas Development Aid

Ireland has a strong, global reputation of delivering quality and principled funding and humanitarian assistance where it is needed most. It has delivered programmes that have provided life-saving support and enhanced the resilience of communities in the most affected parts of the world.

Our legacy in leading the fight against global hunger, has been bolstered by our commitment of €250 million annually over the next four years to address malnutrition and child wasting in fragile and conflict-affected countries.⁶

At a time when aid is being withdrawn in an increasingly unstable geopolitical context, risking decades of progress and exacerbating inequalities, a responsible, flexible and inclusive approach to ODA is critical for achieving global justice and the SDGs. Research shows that the vast majority of Irish people – three in four – support the Irish Government's spending on ODA – a figure that has been consistent for five years.⁷ Ireland has unfailingly championed human rights, humanitarian response and gender equality on the

6 Government of Ireland, 'Ireland announces annual funding of €250 million to address global malnutrition', March 2025 (<https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-foreign-affairs/press-releases/ireland-announces-annual-funding-of-250-million-to-address-global-malnutrition-crisis/#:~:text=The%20Nutrition%20for%20Growth%20Summit%20is%20a%20multi%2Dstakeholder%20summit,the%20global%20fight%20against%20malnutrition>)

7 Dóchas, Worldview research conducted by B&A with a representative sample of 2,515 adults in July–August 2024 (<https://www.dochas.ie/resources/worldview/quantitative-findings/survey-5/>)

international stage, but our ODA is still below the UN target agreed on more than 50 years ago. As crises intensify due to climate change, conflict, inequality, impunity and debt, Ireland must provide leadership by setting a binding roadmap to reach the 0.7% target by 2030 through an increase of €300 million.

Dóchas members, and their local partners, are supporting communities to address

their own development needs and realise their rights. However, the percentage of Irish ODA that is provided to civil society organisations – who are working locally and most proximate to affected populations – has reduced year on year since 2020. It is essential that we fund and support civil society organisations, who can deliver effective community-led action and are on the frontline of response.

Recommendations for the Irish Government in Budget 2026:

- Increase Ireland's ODA by €300 million
- Increase **to 30%** the amount and percentage of funding that is allocated to **civil society organisations**, who are on the ground, delivering assistance directly to affected communities. Investing in local organisations and funds that deliver programmes on the frontlines, empowers communities, maximises the reach and effectiveness of programmes, and supports durable outcomes.
- Leverage our Presidency of the European Council to ensure there is no merger of external action instruments in the next Multiannual Financial Framework (**MFF**), and to reaffirm the European Union's (EU's) commitment to 0.7% GNI on ODA that prioritises poverty reduction and human development.
- Ensure Ireland's ODA upholds **humanitarian and human rights principles** and maintains a focus on quality. Funding that is timely, flexible, predictable and multi-year strengthens local capacity, supports the realisation of medium- to long-term objectives, and enhances resilience.
- Ensure the **empowerment of women** is mainstreamed into all ODA policies and programmes. Allocate increased funding to women-centred organisations, who are at the forefront of the fight for gender justice, through increased allocations to dedicated feminist pooled funds.
- Fulfil our commitment to ensure 15% of our ODA has disability inclusion as its primary objective. Adopt a twin-track approach to **disability inclusion**, mainstreaming disability in all overseas assistance and ring-fencing funding for disability-focused investment and programming, commensurate with the proportion of the population with a disability.
- Increase investment in **Global Citizenship Education**, adopting a cross-departmental approach. This is critical, among other reasons, to enhance the public's understanding of Ireland's contribution to the world, which is rooted in its history of solidarity and compassion.

Climate Finance

The year 2024 was reported as the hottest on record, with a global mean temperature more than 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.⁸ Increasing temperatures have caused a spiralling of the impacts of the climate crisis, with the severity and intensity of climate-related disasters affecting at least 93.1 million people worldwide. Some 26.4 million people are internally displaced, with over three-quarters of these caused by weather events.⁹ The majority of people forcibly displaced as a result of persecution or conflict live in countries that are highly vulnerable and ill-prepared to adapt to climate change. The scale of displacements creates a vicious circle placing vulnerable persons at increased risk of hunger and violence, as tensions in fragile contexts over access to dwindling resources escalate and developing countries grapple with the challenges of addressing the prolonged impacts of the climate crisis.¹⁰

In addition to ODA of 0.7% of GNI, Ireland has committed to pay its fair share of climate finance, including towards addressing loss and damage. Based on the global finance target agreed through the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Ireland's fair share is €500 million per annum for mitigation and adaptation finance. This is likely due to rise significantly in 2026, following a revised global finance target agreed at COP29 (the 29th UN Conference of the Parties).

The quality of Irish climate finance is positive. Our focus on the adaptation needs of least developed countries (LDCs) and small island development states (SIDS), and on grant-based climate finance, is welcome and marks us out as a potential leader, particularly in the European context. However, Ireland falls significantly short in delivering upon our 'fair share' of climate finance and Loss and Damage funding.

We urgently need to scale up funding in order to deliver on our international finance obligations and ensure Ireland pays its fair share of climate finance. Increased financing should continue to be delivered as public grants, not loans, and further provision of funding should be allocated to civil society organisations.

Attention should also be placed on developing a robust, cross-government mechanism for policy coherence for sustainable development aimed at addressing inconsistencies between Ireland's domestic and foreign policies, which risk undermining Ireland's good intentions, and on aligning policies with its human rights and climate justice commitments.

8 WMO, 'WMO confirms 2024 as warmest year on record at about 1.55°C above pre-industrial level' (<https://wmo.int/news/media-centre/wmo-confirms-2024-warmest-year-record-about-155degc-above-pre-industrial-level>)

9 UN Global Humanitarian Overview 2025, December 2024.

10 UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), 'Climate change and displacement' (<https://www.unhcr.org/what-we-do/build-better-futures/climate-change-and-displacement>)

Climate Finance Recommendations for the Irish Government in Budget 2026:

- **Increase overall international climate finance contributions** towards the Government's estimated fair share of at least €500 million per year and develop a new climate roadmap to deliver this.
- Publish a clear pathway for financial support to **the Loss and Damage Fund** consistent with our fair share of the global effort needed. This is estimated to be at least €1.5 billion per year by 2030.¹¹
- Continue to focus on **public, grant-based finance for adaptation** and on the adaptation needs of LDCs and SIDS. Critically assess our grant contributions to multilateral institutions to ensure that the underlying principles of Irish climate finance are upheld.
- Support and engage fully with efforts at the EU and UN levels to **introduce fairer taxation of corporate profits and fossil fuel production**. In particular, Ireland should engage with and fully support the emerging UN Framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation (UNTC).
- Mobilise new and alternative sources of climate finance based on polluter pays and social equity principles, in order to meet increasing climate needs. Broaden our tax base through sustainable, progressive taxation, and support efforts to introduce a global wealth tax.
- **Prioritise distribution through civil society organisations or dedicated climate finance funds**, such as the Green Climate Fund or the Least Developed Countries Fund.

¹¹ Christian Aid and Trócaire, 'The Cost of Inaction: Ireland's Fair Share of Loss & Damage Finance', 2023 (<https://www.trocaire.org/documents/the-cost-of-inaction/>)

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