

Ireland has a long and proud history of standing in solidarity with the poorest and most vulnerable people across the globe, and the quality of its international development assistance is respected globally¹. Its leadership is needed now more than ever in response to COVID-19. As the World Health Organisation reminds us: unless we defeat this virus everywhere we will defeat it nowhere.



THE COVID-19 CRISIS

The COVID-19 pandemic has severely exacerbated systemic problems in developing countries. UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, Philip Alston, has warned of a catastrophe for the world's poorest countries if global action is not urgently taken in light of COVID-19. Here are some critical concerns:

More than 70 million additional people may be pushed into extreme poverty as

a result of COVID-19.² Up to 270 million people will experience acute hunger in 2020, according to the UN's World's Food Programme.³

Hundreds of millions of people are expected to lose their jobs globally, and yet, more than half of the global population have no access to social protection benefits or any form of safety nets.⁴

743 million girls have been forced out of school due to lockdown restrictions,

111 million of those children are in the world's least developed countries.⁵ Globally there is also substantial evidence that domestic violence is on the rise.⁶

The level of humanitarian need has risen sharply with an estimated €31.8 billion needed to address humanitarian needs across 63 countries. So far only €6.67 billion (21%) of total funding needs have been pledged.⁷



BUDGET 2021

In Budget 2021, we urge the Irish Government to match the scale of global need with an ambitious financial commitment.

Now is the time for Ireland to harness the collective multilateral effort towards 'building back better,' as the world grapples with the enormous health, economic and social consequences of the virus, along with the ever-increasing effects of climate change and gender inequality.

As Ireland takes its seat on the Security Council in 2021, we also know that its leadership, voice and actions in support of peace, is needed more than ever. Having

a principled, high quality international development programme will be critical to influence change on the world stage. The Irish Government has already set out its pledge in the new Programme for Government to maintain Ireland's existing investments in ODA - €838 million in 2020 - and to continue to strive to reach the target of spending 0.7% GNI on ODA. This strong commitment is supported by two thirds of the Irish public according to a recent survey.⁸

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.⁹ 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.



In Budget 2021, we ask the Irish Government to:

Maintain Ireland's existing investments in Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) which stand at an estimated €838 million in 2020, and continue the momentum to reach the target of spending 0.7% of GNI on ODA. ODA is central to a robust foreign policy that supports multilateralism, civil society space, and equal opportunities.



2. Commit to responding to both COVID-19 and pre-existing humanitarian needs. To do that the Government needs to be willing to ensure appropriate levels of humanitarian funding and meet Grand Bargain commitments including respect and support for local needs and leadership. Ireland should also continue to support the call to end ongoing conflicts and protect international humanitarian law, using its seat at the Security Council and other diplomatic channels, including its missions, and at EU, UN and Geneva fora.



3. 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 Goals¹⁰ and its international obligations on climate action and gender.



4. 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.



1. OECD DAC's 2020 peer review of Ireland's Overseas Development Assistance programme
2. Philip Alston, "The parlous state of poverty eradication. Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights"
3. Oxfam, "The Hunger Virus: How COVID-19 is fuelling hunger"
4. International Labour Organization, "Countries urged to act on universal social protection"
5. Plan International, "COVID-19: The impact on girls"
6. Plan International, "Living under lockdown. Girls and COVID-19"
7. OCHA, Global Humanitarian Overview June 2020
8. An August 2020 Survey by Dóchas found that 68% of the Irish public feel it's important to support the world's poorest countries during the Covid-19 pandemic.
9. Benefits Report 2020
10. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015