

DÓCHAS
The Irish Association of Non-Governmental Development Organisations

PRESS STATEMENT
15 October 2013

Reaction to Budget 2014:
Six years of cuts in a row – Overseas Aid targeted for further cuts

In response to today's announcement of the Government's measures for Budget 2014, Dóchas - the network of Ireland's Development NGOs – expressed disappointment at the Government's decision to cut the overseas aid budget for the sixth year in a row.

Speaking on behalf of 51 Irish NGOs, Dóchas Director Hans Zomer said:

“Ireland's aid budget has now been cut six years in a row, falling by a whopping 34.6% since 2008. The cuts announced in Budget 2014 mean that the world's poorest people are making a disproportionate contribution to the Government's austerity programme”.

“It also means that the Government has not managed to ‘stabilise’ the aid budget, despite repeated assurances to that effect,” noted Zomer.

Today's decision to cut the overseas aid budget by €19.4 million raises questions about Ireland's ability to live up to its stated ambitions in this regard.

In a comment on the Budget, Dóchas Director Hans Zomer said: “As a nation, we signed onto the global contract to eradicate extreme poverty by 2015. We cannot expect to achieve those goals if we do not live up to our end of the bargain”.

“The Government has indicated that the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals is at the heart of Ireland's foreign policy. It is therefore imperative that Ireland now delivers on fairer trade rules and strategic financing of the type of policies that we know are working”.

“Today's decision means that 99.6% of our national income is NOT spent on international development cooperation” noted Hans Zomer. “Yet we know that Ireland's future fundamentally depends on our ability to trade with other nations and that our overseas aid programme is spent on policies that help bring about a more stable, more prosperous world. If we do not invest in the global institutions and global policies that support developing countries, it means we do not invest in our own future as a small country in a globalised world”.

Dóchas highlighted that there continues to be overwhelming public support in Irish society for overseas aid. In June, an opinion poll undertaken by Ipsos MRBI, found that a very large majority of people – 77 percent – think that “even in an economic down-turn, we have an obligation to invest in overseas aid”.

“Public support for investing in overseas aid remains strong. This opinion poll shows that 4 out of every 5 people in Ireland do not want the economic crisis to be a reason for us to turn our back on the world's poorest people,” noted Zomer.

“The figures remind the Government that the vast majority of people in Ireland feel strongly about our tradition, and our obligations towards those less fortunate than ourselves,” concluded Hans Zomer.

Furthermore, Dóchas members welcomed the Government’s announcement of additional funding to the Department of Justice, to increase staff for the Garda Vetting Service. This will make it easier for NGOs and volunteer sending organisations to perform background checks on their staff and volunteers.

Dóchas also noted the abolition of the airline tax, stating that this measure eliminates a revenue stream that could have been used to fund Ireland’s climate adaptation obligations. “Abolition of the airline tax means Ireland is now deviating from the ‘polluter pays’ principle, when airline fuel is already free,” said Hans Zomer of Dóchas.

Dóchas also welcomed the Government’s stated intention to clamp down on corporate tax evasion, stating that, while details are yet to be announced, measures aimed at increasing tax transparency could play a vital role in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

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NOTES

- The Government has cut ODA from €622,079,000 in 2013 to €602,663,000 in 2014 – cut of just over 3%, and that ODA spending will drop from 0.45% of GNI to 0.43%.
- The economy is set to grow by 2% in 2014. We assume this also means GNI will grow by 2%, from €138bn to €140.76 billion in 2014.
- Vote 27 – “International Cooperation” – has been cut by 2.9% or €14,4 million, bringing the total for 2014 to €482,663,000.
- Non-Vote 27 ODA (the part of Irish ODA not administered by Irish Aid) was cut from €125m to €120m.
- Originally pledged in 2000 at the UN Millennium Summit, it has been Government policy to reach the UN target for spending 0.7% of our GNI on overseas aid. The deadline has changed over time, however, as the original target date of 2007 was revised to 2012 and 2015 respectively. The recently published Policy for International Development formally re-commits Ireland to achieving the UN’s 0.7% target on aid spending, but omits any reference to the 2015 deadline.
- The Ipsos MRBI survey findings are available at www.dochas.ie/Shared/Files/2/Public_Responses_on_Ireland_Investing_in_Overseas_Aid.pdf
- The full text of the Dóchas pre-Budget submission is available at www.dochas.ie/Shared/Files/2/Dochas_Budget_2014_submission.pdf
- Dóchas is the association of Irish Non-Governmental Development Organisations. It provides a forum for consultation and cooperation between its 51 member organisations, and helps them speak with a single voice on development issues.

Dóchas Members

ActionAid Ireland – Afri – Africa Centre – Aidlink – AIDS Partnership with Africa – Alan Kerins Projects – Amnesty International Ireland – Camara Education – Centre for Global Education – Child Aid Ireland–India – ChildFund Ireland – Children in Crossfire – Christian Aid Ireland – CBM Ireland – Comhlámh – Concern Worldwide – Development Perspectives – Foundation Nepal – Friends of Londiani (Ireland) – Galway One World Centre – Gorta – Habitat for Humanity Ireland – Irish Council for International Students (ICOS) – Irish Family Planning Association (IFPA) – Irish League of Credit Unions International Development Foundation (ILCU/IDF) – Irish Missionary Union (IMU) – Irish Red Cross (IRC) – Kerry Action for Development Education (KADE) – Misean Cara – National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) – Nurture Africa – Oxfam Ireland – Plan Ireland – Progressio Ireland – Self Help Africa – SERVE in Solidarity Ireland – Sightsavers – Skillshare International Ireland – Suas Educational Development – Tearfund Ireland – The Haven Community Foundation – The Hope Foundation – The National Council of Ireland YMCA Trust – Trócaire – Unicef Ireland – Vita – Voluntary Service International (VSI) – Voluntary Service Overseas (Ireland) – Volunteer Missionary Movement (VMM) – War on Want Northern Ireland – World Vision Ireland