

Budget 2015

Submission to the Minister for Finance

“Demonstrating Ireland’s Commitment to Development Cooperation”

“Today as Taoiseach in honour of our Famine dead I’m proud to be able to say that combating global hunger and under-nutrition is central both to Ireland’s foreign policy and to our overseas development assistance programme, Irish Aid.

At a global level, strong advocacy actions and high-profile interventions are making Ireland a leader in the fight against global hunger. Today then, across the world, Ireland and the Irish are synonymous with aid outreach compassion. In times and zones of war and hunger it’s an Irish hand, an Irish voice, that gives help and hope, dignity and comfort.”

Taoiseach Enda Kenny TD,
Great Famine Commemoration, Strokestown, May 2014

Summary

In 2000, world leaders committed themselves to the UN target of spending 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) on official development assistance (ODA) by 2015. This means that 70 cent in every €100 will be spent on protecting some of the world's most vulnerable people.

The 0.7% target is based on a percentage, meaning that the growth or shrinkage of a country's economy should not affect its progress towards the target. This in-built mechanism ensures fairness and demonstrates the 0.7% target is not a matter of economic prosperity but a direct indicator of a country's commitment to development

In 2000 Ireland committed itself to reaching the 0.7% ODA/GNI target by 2007. However that deadline was later deferred to 2012 and then to 2015. Earlier this year, the Government indicated that also this third deadline would not be achieved, despite the target and the deadline being outlined in the Programme of Government

In this Budget Submission, the members of Dóchas argue that Ireland urgently needs a plan to get its commitment to the international community back on track, and that the Government must halt the cuts to Ireland's budget for overseas aid.

Introduction

Ireland has a long and proud history of development cooperation. Our international aid programme has been recognised internationally and is a source of national pride. The aid programme has become a central tenet in Ireland's foreign policy, and it has been praised nationally and internationally for its great quality and focus as well as for the cross-party political support that underpins it.

In the period 2000-2008, Ireland made good progress towards achieving the 0.7% ODA/GNI target, committed to at a UN summit in 2000. However, spending peaked in 2007 at 0.59% of GNP and has been falling since, as the aid budget has been cut six consecutive times.

Dóchas acknowledges that the government has worked hard to preserve the Official Development Assistance (ODA) budget in these economically challenging times. However the UN target was set as a percentage of national income precisely because it is an indicator of a country's relative commitment to development; the budget can go up and down in Euro terms, in function of the state of economy.

The coming year, 2015, is a crucial year for development and the international community. In September next year, the members of the United Nations will agree a new global framework for sustainable development and in December the global community is set to agree a new global framework to replace the Kyoto agreement. These are important decisions, and it is in Ireland's strategic interest to seek to influence the policy processes leading up to the summit meetings.

Budget 2015 provides the government with the opportunity to cement our international influence and reputation, by demonstrating Ireland's commitment to development and to the world's poorest people. And in this context, it is important to underline that a big part of our reputation internationally is based on our commitment to the 0.7% ODA/GNI target.

1. Our aid programme is not about 'charity'.

In this submission, the member organisations of Dóchas argue that Ireland's investment in overseas aid is crucial and that it has benefits at home and abroad. In particular, we argue that:

- **Ireland's Aid Programme gives us visibility and influence on the world stage.**
Ireland's development programme is a key part of our foreign policy, one that has been recognised internationally and helps give us influence on the international stage.
- **Aid works.**
Aid has the power to change lives. Huge progress has been made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals and Ireland has played its part in improving the lives of vulnerable people around the world.

- **People in Ireland support aid.**

Public opinion polls and - more importantly - donations to development organisations, have shown time and again that a vast majority of the people in Ireland continue to support for Ireland's overseas development programme.

- **Aid is good for Ireland, too.**

Aid not only helps our partner countries but also offers huge economic potential for Ireland. The global landscape is changing and investment in aid can help stimulate economic growth in developing countries and foster good business relations between countries.

- **2015 is a momentous year for development cooperation in Ireland and worldwide.**

As 2015 draw closer the global conversation on the post 2015 development agenda intensifies. Ireland must show its commitment to this agenda and must also reconfirm its commitment to reaching the 0.7% target.

2. Dóchas call on the government to strengthen Ireland's commitment to international development cooperation.

The members of Dóchas call on the Government to:

- Ensure that there is no further percentage cuts to the ODA budget.
- Present a strong, credible plan, in light of a series of missed deadlines, on how Ireland will keep its commitment to the international community and bring its spending of Official Development Assistance (ODA) to the agreed UN target of 0.7% Gross National Product.

1. Ireland's aid programme gives us visibility and influence on the world stage.

Ireland's international development programme is highly respected internationally, and ensures a better life for some of the world's poorest and most vulnerable people. Ireland's aid programme is a key component of our foreign affairs strategy and our work in this area has given us visibility and influence on the international stage. World leaders and think tanks have highlighted the quality and importance of Ireland's development programme and our commitment to development cooperation played a big role in Ireland's election to the UN Human Rights Council in 2012.

Earlier this year the highly respected Brookings Institute released a report entitled “The Quality of Official Development Assistance.”¹ This report measured 31 DAC member countries and multilateral agencies across four categories; maximising efficiency, fostering institutions, reducing burden and transparency and learning. Ireland was the only country to score in the top 4 of all four categories

“Irish Aid is the only aid programme in the world to reach the top 4 in all 4 categories. We can be very proud of the findings of this report, which shows that in terms of quality, Irish Aid is the world-leading development aid programme. We have always strived to ensure Irish Aid makes a real difference to the lives of the poorest people in the world and this report backs that up.”
Minister Joe Costello TD, July 2014

In the 2009 OECD/DAC Peer Review of Ireland’s aid programme Ireland was commended for its quality and its focus on Least Developed Countries (LDCs). The Review recommended that Ireland should remain committed to achieving 0.7 % ODA/GNI target.²

2. People In Ireland Support Overseas Aid

Despite the challenging economic climate in Ireland, the public support our overseas aid programme and feel that even in such difficult times we are obligated to honour our commitment to the world’s poorest people.

A poll undertaken by Ipsos MRBI poll found that 75% of respondents supported our overseas aid programme and felt that we were obliged to invest in aid even during the economic downturn. 77% believed that it was important for our international reputation that we honour our commitment to the target of 0.7% GNP³.

A large proportion of the Irish public show their support for development assistance through donations. An estimated 690,000 members of the public regularly support Dóchas members financially.

3. Good Quality Aid Works

Good quality aid works and helps protect some of the poorest people in the world. When delivered effectively aid can make a difference in peoples’ lives that spans for generations. International development cooperation leads to a more equal planet which in turn improves global security.

UN reports show that the world is making great progress on the core challenges of the 21st century, as formulated in the Millennium Development Goals.

¹ [The Quality of Official Development Assistance](#), The Brookings Institution

² [Ireland Development Assistance Peer Review](#), 2009 pg 13-14

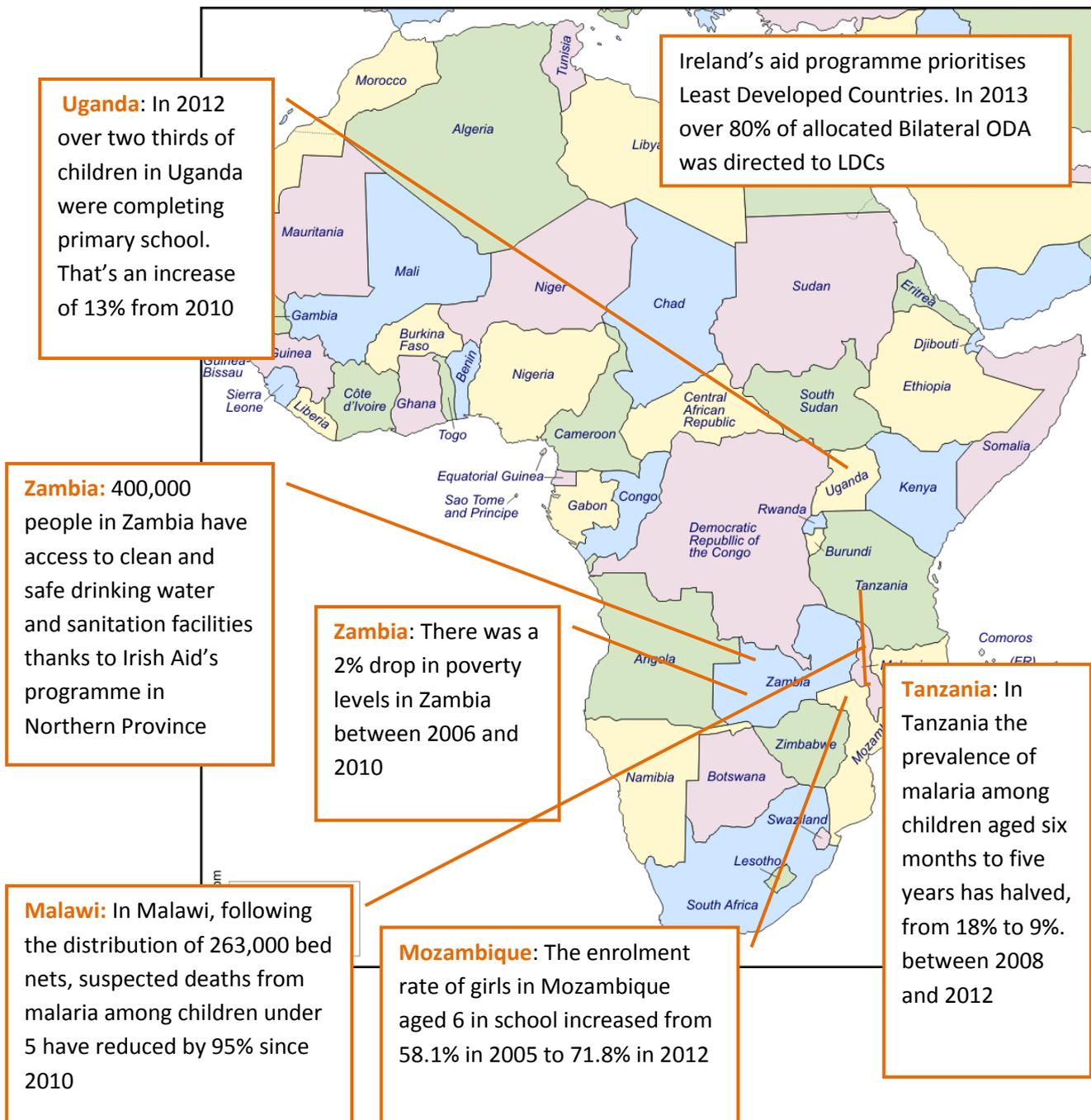
³ [IPSOS MRBI Pill 2014](#)

The table below provides a brief overview of some of the MDG progress to date:

Goal	Global Success
Goal 1. Eradicate Extreme Poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 700 million fewer people lived in conditions of extreme poverty in 2010 than in 1990.
Goal 2 Achieve Universal primary Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Between 2000 and 2011, the number of children out of school declined by almost half—from 102 million to 57 million.
Goal 3 Promote Gender Equality & Empower Women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Just six parliaments in the world today have no women members.
Goal 4 Reduce Child Mortality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worldwide, the mortality rate for children under five dropped by 41% between 1990 and 2011
Goal 5 Improve Maternal Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Globally, the maternal mortality ratio declined by 47% since 1990 The proportion of deliveries in developing regions attended by skilled health personnel rose from 56% in 1990 to 68% in 2012.
Goal 6 Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other Diseases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number of new HIV infections per 100 adults (aged 15 to 49) declined by 44% between 2001 and 2012 Between 2000 and 2010, mortality rates from malaria fell by more than 25% globally Death rates from tuberculosis are likely to be halved by 2015, compared with 1990 levels.
Goal 7 Ensure Environmental Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over the last 21 years, more than 2.1 billion people gained access to improved drinking water, meeting the MDG target five years ahead of schedule despite significant population growth.
Goal 8 Global Partnership for Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By 2011, the debt service to export revenue ratio of developing countries stood at 3.1 %, down from nearly 12% in 2000, and their duty-free market access reached 80% of their exports.

Aid from Ireland has played a critical part in supporting vulnerable people in our partner countries. The effects are long term and ensure better lives for countless people. Ireland can be proud of the part it has played in helping to achieve this monumental progress towards MDGs.

Development Results Supported by Ireland⁴



However despite the huge progress that has been made more work needs to be done. Globally billions of people lives are affected by poverty.

- One in eight people in the world today remain hungry and chronically undernourished.⁵
- More than 2.5 billion people still lack improved sanitation.⁶

⁴ Irish Aid Annual Report 2012, pg 18-30

⁵ Irish Aid Annual Report, 2013,pg 10

- Violence against women continues to undermine global efforts to promote gender equality.⁷

4. Investment in Overseas Aid is Good for Ireland

Ireland's commitment to development cooperation not only benefits the people in Ireland's partner countries but also benefits Ireland itself. Investing in overseas aid helps countries stabilise democracy, reduce poverty, bring in reform and ensure that they have a healthy well educated workforce. This in turn strengthens conditions for economic growth and builds good relationships with potential business partners.

The global economic landscape is changing. Corporations and world leaders are becoming increasingly interested in doing business with Africa. Africa is home to some of the fastest growing economies in the world. Government reforms are helping to attract foreign direct investment, and the continent has an increasingly large middle class and is home to one of the fastest growing telecommunication markets in the world.

"We don't look to Africa simply for its natural resources; we recognize Africa for its greatest resource, which is its people and its talents and their potential. We don't simply want to extract minerals from the ground for our growth; we want to build genuine partnerships that create jobs and opportunity for all our peoples and that unleash the next era of African growth. That's the kind of partnership America offers."

President Barack Obama, US-Africa Business Forum, August 2014

The Government's Africa Strategy and the Ireland's Policy for International Development made it clear that Ireland values its humanitarian and development commitments with Africa but that the relationship is changing. It is in Ireland's interest to build a strong partnership with Africa and develop trade and business relationships that are mutually beneficial.

The Africa Strategy states that "as the relationship between Ireland and Africa matures, we must ourselves begin to look to and prepare for expanded ties with African countries in the medium to long-term which move beyond historical donor-recipient type relationships and towards more multi-faceted relationships incorporating strengthened trade, investment, tourism and people-to-people links."⁸

5. An international commitment that needs to be met.

coming year, 2015, is a crucial year for development and the international community. In September next year, the members of the United Nations will agree a new global framework for sustainable development and in December the global

⁶ IrishAid Annual Report, 2013, pg 11

⁷ [United Nations Millennium Development Goals](#), Goal 3 Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women

⁸ [Barack Obama Speech](#), US-Africa Business Forum, August 2014

community is set to agree a new global framework to replace the Kyoto agreement. These are important decisions, and it is in Ireland's strategic interest to seek to influence the policy processes leading up to the summit meetings.

In 2000, Ireland made its international commitment to reaching the United Nations target of spending 0.7% of national income on official development assistance. We promised that the target would be met by 2007. The deadline was then deferred to 2012 and finally to 2015. Ireland's "One World One Future" Policy for International Development, published in May 2013, recommitted Ireland to achieving the 0.7% target stating that the government would move towards the 0.7% when economic circumstances permitted it.⁹

Yet, in early 2014 the Government announced that Ireland would, once again, not be able to fulfil its promise the world's poorest people and meet the target of 0.7% by 2015.

Ireland's continued deferral of the 0.7% GNP deadline throws Ireland's commitment into question and threatens the achievements of our overseas aid programme.

The current Government position, that Ireland remains "committed" to the 0.7% target, and that it will make progress toward the target "when economic circumstances permit" is neither credible nor tenable.

The Government must address the policy void in this key area of Irish foreign policy. It is imperative that the Government draw up plan which shows the step by step approach that it will take to achieve the 0.7% target. Key annual targets need to be set - and met.

The members of Dóchas call on the Government to:

- 1. Ensure that there is no further percentage cuts to the ODA budget.**
- 2. Present a strong, credible plan, in light of a series of missed deadlines on how Ireland will keep its commitment to the international community and bring its spending of Official Development Assistance (ODA) to the agreed UN target of 0.7% Gross National Product.**

⁹ One World One Future, Ireland' Policy for International Development, pg 9

www.dochas.ie

Dóchas is the association of Irish Non-Governmental Development Organisations. It provides a forum for consultation and cooperation between its members, and helps them speak with a single voice on development issues.

For further information visit: www.dochas.ie

Dóchas member and associate member organisations:

ActionAid Ireland, Addressing the Unaddressed, Afri, Africa Centre, AgeAction Ireland, Aidlink, AIDS Partnership with Africa, Alan Kerins Projects, Amnesty International Ireland, ATD 4th World, Camara Education, Centre for Global Education, Child Aid Ireland – India, ChildFund Ireland, Children in Crossfire, Christian Aid Ireland, CBM Ireland, Comhlámh, Concern Worldwide, Debt and Development Coalition Ireland, Development Perspectives, ElectricAid, Foundation Nepal, Friends of Londiani (Ireland), Frontline Defenders, Galway One World Centre, Gorta Self Help Africa, Habitat for Humanity Ireland, Irish Council for International Students, Irish Family Planning Association, Irish Foundation for Co-operative Development, Irish League of Credit Unions Foundation, Irish Missionary Union, Irish Red Cross, Kimmage Development Studies Centre, Livability Ireland, Misean Cara, Kerry One World Centre, National Youth Council of Ireland, Nurture Africa, Oxfam – Ireland, Plan Ireland, SERVE in Solidarity Ireland, Sierra Leone Ireland Partnership, Sightsavers Ireland, Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Special Olympics Europe/Eurasia, Suas Educational Development, Tearfund Ireland, The Haven Community Foundation, The Hope Foundation, The National Council of Ireland YMCA Trust, Trócaire, UNICEF Ireland, Value Added in Africa, Vita, Voluntary Service International, Voluntary Service Overseas, Volunteer Missionary Movement, War on Want Northern Ireland, World Vision Ireland