

DÓCHAS
The Irish Association of Non-Governmental Development Organisations

PRESS STATEMENT

22 April 2009

UK Government Budget protects Overseas Aid

**Irish Government fails to follow UK leadership, say
NGOs**

Irish aid agencies today stepped up their criticism of the government, by pointing out that it is out of sync with major European governments.

“Despite the economic crisis gripping the whole of Europe, most EU countries are holding firm on their aid promises. Our government seems intent on demolishing its aid programme, while the UK government today showed it is holding firm on its aid promises” said Hans Zomer, Director of Dóchas, the umbrella group of Ireland’s major aid agencies.

The UK government today announced its Budget for next year. In a statement, the UK Prime Minister’s Office indicated that UK “aid increases will remain exactly at the levels that they were forecast in 2007 - despite the economic downturn - not only for the current financial year 09-10 (£ 7.47billion) but also for 10/11 - which will see us reach a record amount of £ 9.1bn spent on aid in 2010/11.”

“By not cutting its aid budget, the UK has not only honoured its aid promises, it has actually exceeded them. The UK is now also set to overtake Ireland in terms of the proportion of national income it spends on overseas aid” said Hans Zomer.

“By next year, the UK will spend 0.6% of its national income on overseas aid – 60p out of every hundred pounds – and is therefore closer to achieving the promise of 0.7% than Ireland is. The UK government has shown that it is willing, despite the crisis, to put its money where its mouth is.”

Ireland has cut its aid budget 4 times in the last year, knocking over 20% of our aid programme. The government had promised to spend 0.6% of national income on overseas aid by 2010, but is way off track: 2009 spending is set to come in at only 0.48% of national income.

The Irish overseas aid budget has been cut by €45 million in July 2008, by another €15 million in October 2008, as well as by €95 million in February this year, and €100 million in the April 2009 Emergency Budget.

Notes for the Editors

- At the UN Millennium Review Summit in 2005, the Taoiseach Bertie Ahern committed Ireland to reaching the UN target for spending 0.7% of our GNP on overseas aid in 2012.
- The government set interim targets “against which our progress towards the target can be measured”. The interim target set for 2010, next year, is 0.6% of GNI. Aid expenditure for 2009 is predicted to reach 0.48%, well short of the interim target.

For further information, see www.dochas.ie

Contacts:

- Hans Zomer, Dóchas Director, tel. 085 728 3258 / 01 405 3801
- Eamonn Casey, Dóchas Policy Officer, tel 087 9506222 / policy@dochas.ie

Dóchas is the association of Irish Non-Governmental Development Organisations. It provides a forum for consultation and cooperation between its 39 members, and helps them speak with a single voice on development issues. For more information, visit: www.dochas.ie

Dóchas Member Agencies

1. ActionAid Ireland
2. Action from Ireland
3. Aidlink
4. Amnesty International-Irish Section
5. Bóthar
6. Centre for Global Education
7. ChildFund Ireland
8. Children in Crossfire
9. Christian Aid Ireland
10. Church Mission Society Ireland
11. Comhlámh
12. Concern Worldwide
13. Friends of Londiani (Ireland)
14. Galway One World Centre
15. Gorta
16. International Service Ireland
17. Irish League of Credit Unions Foundation
18. Irish Commission for Justice and Social Affairs
19. Irish Council for International Students
20. Irish Family Planning Association
21. Irish Foundation for Cooperative Development

22. Irish Missionary Union
23. Irish Red Cross
24. Kerry Action for Development Education
25. National Youth Council of Ireland
26. Oxfam Ireland
27. Plan Ireland
28. Self Help Africa
29. Skillshare International Ireland
30. Suas Educational Development
31. The Hope Foundation
32. Trócaire
33. Vita
34. Voluntary Service International
35. Voluntary Service Overseas
36. Volunteer Missionary Movement
37. War on Want Northern Ireland
38. Wingspread International
39. World Vision Ireland