



No Time To Lose

A Call for Action on Conflict,
Hunger and Climate

Dóchas Pre-Budget 2025 Submission

dóchas

The Irish Association
of Non-Governmental
Development Organisations

June 2024

Introduction

Dóchas is the Irish Network for International Development and Humanitarian Organisations. We connect, strengthen and represent 56 international NGOs who have a shared vision of a just, sustainable and equal world. As we approach the end of this Government and the last five years for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), now is a critical time for Ireland to stand with the global south and fulfil our commitment to supporting those who are furthest behind.

The escalating conflicts in Sudan, Gaza and Ukraine, the impact of El Niño on Southern Africa, and climate shocks around the world are having a devastating effect on the lives of millions of people. The gap between humanitarian needs and funding is widening, and we must act now.

Ireland's solidarity with those in the global south, and its leadership on upholding humanitarian principles, supporting human rights and ending hunger is greatly valued by our sector and by the Irish public.¹ An Tánaiste, Micheál Martin, previous Minister for Foreign Affairs, Simon Coveney, and this Government have re-affirmed their commitment to Ireland's overseas aid programme over the last four years. However, we must act more decisively to prevent the reversal of decades of progress towards ending poverty. Realising our target of 0.7% would provide the resources needed to match Ireland's policy of reaching the furthest behind first.

Budget 2025 will be the last opportunity for this Government, and this Oireachtas, to set a course to realise Ireland's international commitments for a better, more peaceful and sustainable world. We need to accelerate progress to reach our commitment of spending 0.7% of our GNI on Official Development Assistance (ODA) by 2030.

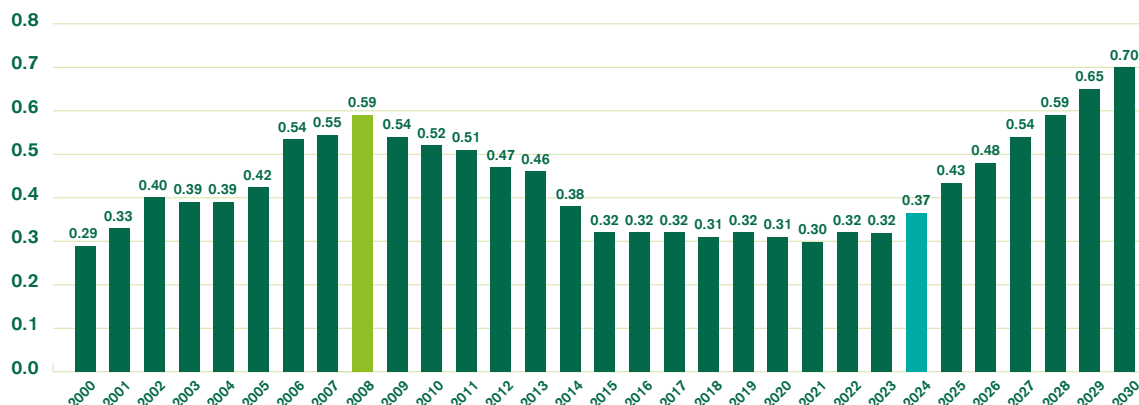
We are calling on the Government to commit to taking ambitious, accelerated and transformative action to address food insecurity, tackle the climate emergency and end structural inequality. We must ensure that our funding is targeted at the real changemakers – civil society organisations, local actors and women's organisations, who work on the frontlines of response and are best placed to deliver effective support to those most in need. Efforts must be made to ensure that they can operate in an environment where they can succeed. Without deliberate global policies to accelerate progress, at least 492 million people will be left in extreme poverty by 2030.²

The Irish Government must make real and tangible progress to its commitment of spending 0.7% of GNI on ODA by increasing the ODA budget in 2025 by €292m. This would bring us to 0.37% of ODA that is spent overseas, and put us on track to achieve our target. Incremental annual increases will not be enough to meet our commitment of 0.7%.

¹ 76% of the Irish public agree that it is important for the Irish Government to provide overseas development aid, while 77% of the public believe Ireland's provision of ODA helps bring about positive change for those living in developing countries. Both statistics have remained stable over the last four years. Worldview survey of public attitudes to ODA, Dóchas in partnership with Irish Aid, 2024.

² The 2022 Africa Sustainable Development Report by the African Union Commission (AUC), the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the African Development Bank (AfDB), and the UN Development Programme (UNDP).

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



GNI ratio projected based on a linear path from 0.32% in 2023 to 0.7% in 2030. GNI and ODA for 2000 – 2023 source OECD DAC. GNI 2024 – 2027 based on Department of Finance Stability Update April 2024 and GNI 2028 – 2030 estimated based on average growth 2024-2027. This excludes ODA spent on in-country refugee costs.

Ireland should fulfil its commitment to fund 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. This will ensure that Ireland’s support to those seeking refuge will not have a negative impact on overseas aid programmes and contributions. We strongly believe that the Irish Government can do both.

Many of the recommendations outlined in this submission have both budgetary and policy implications. Major structural changes are needed to address the immense humanitarian and climate needs, to build sustainable food systems and to construct a fairer financial system.

Recommendations for the Irish Government in Budget 2025:

- **Make real progress to realising the commitment to spend 0.7% of GNI on ODA by 2030 by increasing the ODA budget in 2025 by €292m and publish a pathway to achieve this.**
- **Deliver on our commitment of €225m per annum of climate finance at a minimum and set a pathway to increase this allocation to Ireland’s actual ‘fair share’ of €500m per year.³**
- **Ensure that 25% of all Irish ODA is allocated to locally-led humanitarian, development and peace initiatives that can deliver support directly to affected populations.**

“In responding to the destruction of our very prospects for survival and all of our peoples, we must now turn a corner, moving past reactive emergency responses to tackling what are the consequences of the underlying structural causes... that we are not addressing.”

— President Higgins at Dóchas 50th Anniversary Conference, May 2024.

³ Analysis by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI).

Humanitarian Needs and Sustainable Development

Overall Goal:

The Irish Government reaches its target of spending 0.7% of GNI in overseas ODA, by committing an increase of €292m in 2025, putting Ireland on a clear pathway to reach 0.7% by 2030.

Over 299 million people around the world will need humanitarian assistance and protection in 2024 due to conflicts, climate emergencies and other drivers.⁴ Of these, 74.1 million are in East and Southern Africa, with 25 million in Sudan alone. Worryingly, international funding for these crises is below target and the levels of response to global appeals stands only at 16.1%.⁵

The Government must respond urgently to escalating humanitarian needs, while also tackling the root causes of why humanitarian emergencies occur in the first place and recognising the interconnectedness of climate change, poverty and exclusion as drivers of conflict, displacement, food insecurity and protection risks.

A more agile approach is needed. The Government should ensure that Ireland's humanitarian and development assistance is committed to locally-led initiatives that enable local communities to build long-term resilience. Civil society and local actors including women's rights organisations, traditional and community leaders, local authorities, national and local organisations offer greater, and more direct, access to affected people, contributing to more effective, efficient and sustainable action.

4 UN Global Humanitarian Overview 2024.

5 UN Global Humanitarian Overview 2024, May Update.

Recommendations for the Irish Government in Budget 2025:

- Increase the amount and quality of humanitarian funding that goes to local actors, ensuring access to flexible, predictable, multi-year funding, enabling them to respond to the specific issues related to their particular context.
- Ensure that Ireland's ODA, and EU ODA, upholds humanitarian and human rights principles, and is compliant with ODA 'principled actions', thereby meeting the needs and assuring the dignity and protection of those furthest behind.
- Show leadership among EU member states to maintain the EU annual humanitarian budget set for 2021-2027 and ensure that budget cuts do not impact on the poorest and most vulnerable in the most fragile states.
- Advocate at policy, international and regional fora for reform of the UN system and the prioritisation of locally-led delivery.
- Commit to a 10% increase in child-related investment each year, which has the potential to double the impact of current funding.⁶
- Increase funding for Global Citizenship Education in Ireland to meet our commitment to SDG Target 4.7.

⁶ A study by World Vision has indicated a total return on investment of US\$10 for every US\$1 invested in children through ODA. 'Putting Children First for Sustainable Development', World Vision, 2024.

Climate

Overall Goal:

Ireland increases its efforts to reduce our emissions, reaches its 'fair share' of €500 million of climate finance per annum to low-income countries and people on the frontline of the climate crisis, and publishes a pathway of financial support to the Loss and Damage Fund (LDF).

The UN reported earlier this year that the climate crisis is spiralling, leaving a trail of destruction in its wake. In the Greater Horn of Africa region, the effects of the severe and prolonged drought from 2021 to 2023 (the worst in 40 years) will last for up to a decade, with between 80% and 100% of livelihoods lost. Internal displacement caused by climate change surged by 45% in a single year, between 2021 and 2022.⁷

Ireland's contributions to international climate finance reached €120m in 2022. This support is vital but still falls far short of the Government's own target of reaching €225m per year by 2025 – and much shorter still of Ireland's €500m 'fair share' of its global responsibilities.⁸

We believe Ireland must now act to reach its 'fair share' to these communities by increasing our annual climate finance contributions to €500m per annum. Furthermore, while the Irish climate support that reaches communities directly is effective and real, only 21% of it is being channelled to civil society organisations, while 65% goes to large multilateral organisations and international partnerships.⁹

We call on the Irish Government to greatly increase the provision of climate finance to civil society actors, women-centred organisations and communities under the same principles of value, effectiveness and empowerment as ODA.

Support to the new international Loss and Damage Fund is also crucial. Ireland helped to establish this fund – now we must back it with significant, new and innovative sources of finance.

7 UN Global Humanitarian Overview 2024 and OCHA Greater Horn of Africa Update, February 2024.

8 Ireland's fair share contribution of €500m is based on research from the ODI (2023), as well as from Christian Aid Ireland and Trócaire (2019, 2023) using the Stockholm Environment Institute's Eco-Equity framework. This estimate is based on key factors including historic greenhouse gas emissions and financial capacity to act. 'The Cost of Inaction', Trócaire and Christian Aid Ireland and 'A Fair Share of Climate Finance', ODI.

9 Ireland's Climate and Environmental Finance Report 2022.

Recommendations for the Irish Government in Budget 2025:

- **Deliver on our commitment of €225m per annum of climate finance at a minimum and set a pathway to increase this allocation to Ireland's actual 'fair share' of €500m per year.¹⁰ Ensure that Ireland's climate finance is new and additional to any future increases in ODA as per Ireland's obligations under UNFCCC.**
- **Ensure that climate finance to civil society organisations is increased greatly beyond 21% in Budget 2025 so that it represents a much larger overall share of our contribution and reaches local communities, local farmers and women-centred organisations.**
- **Continue to deliver Ireland's climate finance in grants rather than loans, as is the case in our direct assistance, and where support is given through multilateral institutions, provide robust evidence to show that this assistance is targeted, valuable and effective in reaching people and communities on the frontline.**
- **Contribute to an adequately funded LDF in line with best academic estimates of global need and develop a pathway to provide at least €1.5 billion towards addressing loss and damage by 2030,¹¹ including through new and innovative financial instruments, such as progressive global taxes on polluters.**
- **Stop the US\$6.2 billion in bonds and shares flowing through Ireland's Foreign Direct Investment to fossil fuel industries and agribusiness in the global south, as recommended by the UN International Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights, and amend the Fossil Fuel Divestment Act to achieve this.¹²**

El Niño-induced droughts have severely affected a large region of Southern Africa.

Malawi, Zambia, Mozambique and Zimbabwe are experiencing the worst drought in 40 years as a direct effect of climate change exacerbating the effects of El Niño. Twelve million people who depend on rain-fed agriculture are feeling the severe impacts, through loss of livelihoods, mass deaths of their livestock as well as failed harvests. Malnutrition rates are rising, particularly among children, with one in three already suffering from stunted growth. The next rainy season is not expected until September or October, so the situation will remain dire until at least then.¹³

10 Analysis by the ODI.

11 See academic estimates in Chapter 12, 'The Cost of Inaction', Trócaire and Christian Aid Ireland (2023).

12 ActionAid Ireland, 'How the Finance Flows,' 2023.

13 Oxfam International, internal briefing, May 2024.

A Fairer Global Financial System

Overall Goal:

Ireland plays a much stronger role in reforming the global system of debt, tax and trade, which has prevented the achievement of the SDGs.

There are many structural obstacles to progress on achieving the SDGs. We need to turn the tide on decades of extracting wealth from countries in the global south for the benefit of rich countries in the north. Many terms of trade, tax and debt practices continue to penalise these countries and prevent them from realising their potential for their people and their environment.¹³

According to the UN, curbing annual capital flight of US\$88.6 billion from Africa could bridge as much as half of its SDG financing gap. It further finds that preventing illicit financial flows, which it describes as a “shared problem between developed and developing countries”, would help Africa reach the SDGs through higher levels of productivity, capacity and efficiency.¹⁵

We must reform our Government's policies in Budget 2025 to make sure they have the coherence to address the economic causes of inequality of power, voice and gender, in the global south.

Ireland has shown its potential for reform by supporting the African Development Bank, and in 2024 Minister Michael McGrath re-channelled 20% of IMF special drawing rights valued at €800 million to low- and middle-income countries.¹⁶ However, if Government policy is to be coherent and fit to meet its global challenges in Budget 2025, it must help remove global obstacles in debt, tax and trade, and reform the decision-making bodies which govern them.

14 These are known as ‘obstacles’ to progress in a new era of reform which will be discussed at the UN Summit of the Future this year.

15 Tackling Illicit Financial Flows for Sustainable Development in Africa, UNCTAD.

16 Special drawing rights are the IMF’s unit of account. See ‘Minister McGrath announces €800 million financing ahead of the IMF and World Bank Spring Meetings,’ Department of Finance, 16 April, 2024.

17 A spillover analysis was last carried out in 2014 in line with the annual budgetary process. ‘Department of Finance Launches Spillover Analysis Research Project,’ MerrionStreet.ie, 2014.

18 ‘End Surcharges Campaign, CSOs call on the IMF to end harmful surcharges,’ Movement for Economic, Development and Ecological Justice.

19 Submission of the UN independent expert on foreign debt, other international financial obligations and human rights, Attiya Waris, to the UN Conference of the Parties (COP28).

Recommendations for the Irish Government in Budget 2025:

- **Adopt the formal recommendations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to conduct a new, independent and comprehensive ‘spillover analysis’, assessing the impact of Ireland’s tax policies on the economies of developing countries.¹⁷**
- **Support the creation of a new UN tax convention and fiscal bodies at regional global south levels, along with voting reforms at the international financial institutions, as integral policies of Ireland’s candidacy for the UN Human Rights Council.**
- **Continue to participate in the reallocation of IMF special drawing rights to low- and middle-income countries, and push for two new US\$650 billion issuances by 2030, along with support for progressive policies at the African Development Bank.**
- **Challenge harmful IMF austerity policies in the global south that cut or freeze public sector expenditure (and wage bill spending) in countries in the global south, which are detrimental to women’s rights especially.**
- **Support debt cancellation and debt treatment alternatives, end IMF surcharges¹⁸ and investigate the link between tax conditionalities, inequalities and lack of social protection, particularly in countries that are food insecure.**
- **Act for greater trade policy flexibility and fairness in order to allow developing and global south countries to pursue their own paths to food security and development, and support technology transfer to the global south in areas including climate change adaptation and mitigation, and development of medicines.**
- **Prioritise Policy Coherence for Development and Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD) as essential commitments under EU Law and at this year’s UN Summit of the Future.**

Professor Attiya Waris, the UN independent expert on foreign debt, other financial obligations and human rights, spoke at Dóchas’s 50th Anniversary Conference:

“By centering communities, an inclusive approach of international cooperation and assistance should be adopted. It is imperative to prioritize and safeguard the human rights of those disproportionately affected by climate change, considering various intersections and social determinants that create additional barriers for individuals to enjoy their rights. In essence, this entails implementing actions for those in need and involving them in decision-making processes based on their specific requirements and priorities.”¹⁹

Sustainable Food Systems

Overall Goal:

Ireland plays a decisive role in Budget 2025 in leading on the issue that resonates most in our history, the goal of ending hunger, by creating lasting, sustainable food systems for people and planet.

The SDGs aim for a world free of hunger by 2030. Yet, acute food insecurity is a reality for 258 million people in 58 countries,²⁰ driven by armed conflict, economic shocks, climate change, poverty and deepening inequalities. Wasting threatens the lives of 45 million children under the age of five (accounting for 7% of all children). Without concerted efforts to face this terrible reality, the food security outlook will deteriorate further in 2024 and 2025.

Ireland must continue to support emergency situations in Sudan, Gaza and East Africa by devoting vital emergency efforts and resources to them without delay. However, a systemic understanding of why our global food architecture is so widely called 'dysfunctional', and why the system is so vulnerable to global price shocks and shortages, must also be urgently addressed in Budget 2025's economic policy-making.

2025 will mark the end of the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition. The French Government will host the Nutrition for Growth summit in 2025, a global pledging conference and huge opportunity for Ireland as a leading donor on nutrition. The UN General Assembly Summit of the Future and the COP climate conference in Baku, Azerbaijan, both in 2024, are also major moments where Ireland can demonstrate its commitment to making the global food system more sustainable, more local and much safer for all people, and for our planet.

²⁰ UN Global Humanitarian Overview 2024.

Recommendations for the Irish Government in Budget 2025:

- Meet Ireland's financial pledge of €800 million over five years²¹ to support nutrition and prevent food insecurity and food crises, prioritising quality assistance and 'last-mile' delivery, investing in stronger health systems and reinforcing anticipatory action mechanisms.
- Conduct a new, independent and comprehensive 'spillover analysis' to assess the impact of Ireland's policies and of Irish-based food and agriculture industries on societies, environments and human rights outside Ireland, especially in the global south.
- End the link between debt and hunger by supporting debt cancellation and debt treatment alternatives in countries that are food insecure and allow them trade flexibility and fairness.
- Support just transitions in agriculture and food systems, at home and abroad, by providing support and incentives to workers and farmers, especially small-scale farmers and women²² who face inequalities and discrimination when it comes to access to land, support and credit.
- Create mechanisms to achieve more equitable and faster access to ODA, the LDF and climate finance for local food producers in the global south to strengthen their capacity to adapt to climate change and recover from climate-related events.
- Prioritise implementation of the COP 28 Emirates Declaration on Resilient Food Systems, Sustainable Agriculture and Climate Action and call for the provision of additional climate finance to developing countries.
- Take leadership on addressing the gap in climate finance assigned to agriculture highlighted in the Breakthrough Agenda Report 2023 and the lack of support for locally-led adaptation solutions (under 1% of global climate finance is focused on small-scale agri-food systems).

21 2021 Nutrition for Growth Summit commitment, Ireland, Global Nutrition Report.

22 Women comprise an average of 43% of the agricultural labour force of developing countries and up to almost 50% in Eastern and South-eastern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, UN FAO Factsheet.

Disability Inclusion

Overall Goal:

Ensure Ireland's commitments under the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD) relating to international cooperation are fully recognised and implemented in its approach to development and humanitarian action in both policy and funding.

Article 11 and Article 32 require that Ireland's approach to overseas assistance is compatible with its wider commitments under the UNCRPD to be fully disability inclusive. Ireland has made little progress in this area since ratifying the Convention and a renewed focus on disability inclusion is necessary to move disability justice from the periphery of Ireland's international cooperation and humanitarian assistance.

People with disabilities comprise between one sixth and one fifth of the world's population, with 800 million living in low- and middle-income countries across the global south. Many of them are not able to claim their rights,

and face stigma that prevents them from accessing healthcare and education.

We need transformative and accelerated action that is inclusive of people with disabilities and in line with the CRPD. A 7% increase in Ireland's ODA would enable Ireland to make its overseas aid disability inclusive while ensuring the impact and reach of the work is maintained. In line with Ireland's commitments to reach the furthest behind first, an enhanced focus on disability inclusion is necessary to ensure justice and equality for people with disabilities, who are repeatedly overlooked when it comes to development planning.

Recommendations for the Irish Government in Budget 2025:

- **Increase Ireland's ODA to enable all overseas assistance to be disability inclusive and make disability inclusion a requirement for all recipients of Ireland's ODA.**
- **Ensure that Ireland adopts a twin-track approach to disability inclusion in its overseas aid and international cooperation, making disability mainstreaming a priority in all overseas assistance and ringfencing funding for disability-focused investment and programming, commensurate with the proportion of the population experiencing disability.**
- **Develop an Irish Aid-led strategy on disability inclusion in international cooperation.**
- **Ensure the foundations for disability inclusion as outlined in the UNCRPD – universal access, reasonable accommodation, data disaggregation, among others – are included as minimum standards for all international cooperation.**

Conclusion

Ireland's continued leadership and championing of human rights, peace-building and principled aid on a global stage is crucial. Now is the time for Ireland to demonstrate its commitment to those who are furthest behind.

We can achieve this through:

- **Making real progress to realising the commitment to spend 0.7% of GNI on ODA by 2030 by increasing the ODA budget in 2025 by €292m and publish a pathway to achieving this.**
- **Delivering on our commitment of €225m per annum of climate finance at a minimum, and set a pathway to increase this allocation to Ireland's actual 'fair share' of €500m per year.²³**
- **Ensuring that 25% of all Irish ODA is allocated to locally-led humanitarian, development and peace initiatives, that can deliver support directly to affected populations.**

There is no time to lose. We must act now.

Front cover image: Pakistan: Women of the affected community on their way home carrying drinking water on their heads. Photo: Ingenious Captures/Concern Worldwide

²³ Analysis by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI)

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