



"Irish development cooperation represents our sense of a broader global concern and our obligation to those with whom we share this planet and our humanity. It represents our shared belief in democracy, solidarity and fairness. Above all, it demonstrates a clear awareness that with prosperity comes a responsibility to assist those who are most marginalised and vulnerable."
Minister for Foreign Affairs Dermot Ahern TD, November 2, 2006.

Did Ireland hit the EU target of 0.33% in 2006 without inflating its aid? YES
Will Ireland meet its 0.7% target of GNI in 2012 without inflating its aid? NGO prediction: LIKELY.

According to the latest OECD figures, Ireland spent 0.53% of its GNI on ODA in 2006, up from 0.41% in 2005. Irish NGOs are pleased that the government increased its spending in real terms and as a percentage of GNI, and is set to achieve its first interim target of spending 0.5% by 2007. In the absence of ODA legislation the 2007 general election lends some uncertainty to this outlook.

A very small amount of Irish aid is inflated. In 2006, Ireland reported a total of €794 million in ODA. Of this, €1 million was debt cancellation and using OECD/DAC figures we estimate, based on trends from recent years, that €2.4 million was spent on educating students in Ireland and €3 million was spent on housing refugees in Ireland. Even once this inflated aid is subtracted, however, Ireland increased its genuine aid resources by one third from 2005 to 2006.

NGOs welcome the fact that Irish aid is strongly poverty-focused, with ODA going primarily to least developed and other low-income countries, and that it features good predictability.

2006 saw the publication of the first White Paper on Irish Aid. NGOs were pleased with Ireland's recommitment to an aid target of 0.7% and to wholly untied aid; to tackling poverty and inequality and to enhancing aid effectiveness. Yet a 2007 general election and the absence of ODA legislation give rise to some uncertainty about aid focus and budget.

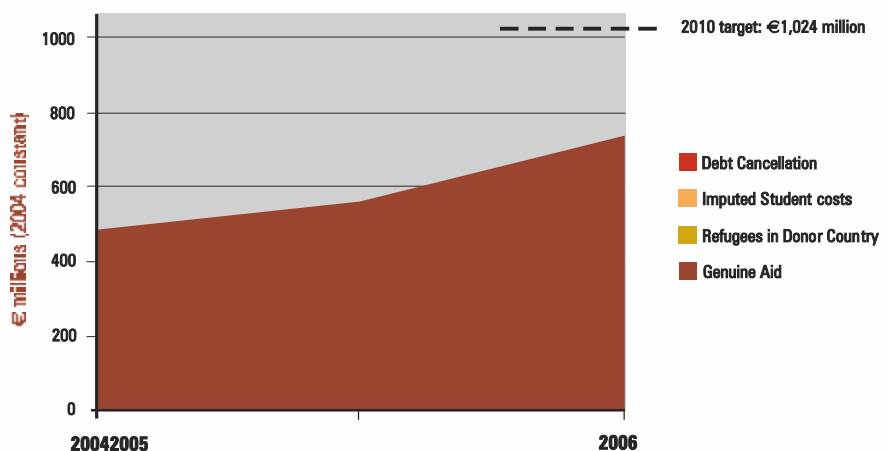
The White Paper reiterated the strong emphasis within Irish development cooperation on basic social services, though NGOs would like to see spending strengthened in this area from the 16% of bilateral ODA reported by the OECD for Ireland in 2005.

There are some concerns, in the context of staff shortages and a significantly expanding programme, about Irish Aid's continuing ability to deliver high quality aid. Irish NGOs call for clear commitment, across government departments, to providing the staff and systems needed – and real progress on this after the planned management review.

Irish NGOs urge their government to:

- ◆ lock in recent gains by setting out annual targets for reaching 0.7% ODA/GNI for all the years to 2012, and legislating for a minimum of 0.7%. This should remain exclusive of any funding for debt cancellation;
- ◆ provide sufficient resources, especially staff levels, and assure whole of government coherence for development to sustain and enhance the quality of Irish development cooperation;
- ◆ continue to improve aid effectiveness in partnership with Northern and Southern governments, through continually enhancing its own programme and the broader aid effectiveness agenda.

Ireland's genuine and inflated aid



Note: all figures including 2010 target figure in 2004 prices for comparability (see endnote 1)

Organisations consulted: Dóchas, Oxfam Ireland, Trócaire, Concern, Christian Aid Ireland, Debt and Development Coalition Ireland.