

**“In 2005, the OECD/DAC made a promising balance of our development cooperation policy. The DAC congratulated Belgium for its commitment to reach the 0.7% ODA/GNI by 2010; on its geographical concentration; and on its increasing aid figures. Despite a difficult budgetary context, Belgium will stick to its promise to reach 0.7% by 2010.”**

**Former Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt, speech to the Belgian Technical Cooperation, February 2007.**



# Belgium

**Has Belgium established a timetable to reach the target of 0.7% by 2010? YES**

**Will Belgium meet its target of 0.7% of GNI by 2010 without inflating its aid? NGO prediction: UNLIKELY**

Belgium's ODA dropped from 0.53% in 2005, to 0.5% in 2006, to a mere 0.43% in 2007. Decreasing official figures can be partly explained by the fact in 2007 debt cancellations were smaller than they had been in previous years. However, the main reason is the lack of political will. The government has recently made new promises to meet 0.5% ODA/GNI in 2008. However, NGOs are concerned that end of the year budget cuts may come again into play in 2008, limiting the government's ability to fulfill its promises. It is also a great concern for Belgian NGOs that genuine aid has stagnated at 0.38% of GNI since 2003. The Belgian government would have to increase real aid by €1 billion to reach the 0.7% target by 2010.

## • Aid quality

One challenge facing Belgian aid is the lack of coordination among different ministries responsible for international policy which has an impact on developing countries – such as trade, development and finance. All too often decisions taken in some of these ministries actually undermine other actions taken towards achieving internationally agreed development goals. Belgian aid also suffers from a lack of coordination between the federal and regional institutions – which is paradoxical when efforts are being made internationally to further coordinate and harmonise the actions of different donors.

Aid should not be used to pursue Belgian interests abroad. In this regard, NGOs welcome the government's decision to officially

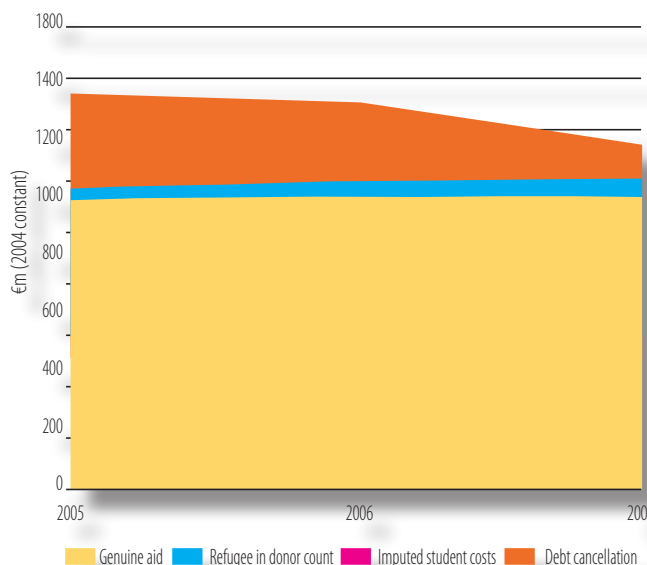
untie all its aid to least developed countries in 2002. However, aid channelled through the Ministry of Finance, as well as technical assistance, is not yet untied. Official OECD DAC figures show that the amount of Belgian tied aid has increased significantly and tied aid as a percentage of real aid is now 18% of total bilateral ODA. Recent analysis of Belgian aid to Ecuador shows that all loans were tied to the purchase of Belgian goods and services.

Gender equality is also another area where the Belgian government is not living up to its commitments. Although a gender strategy was approved in 2002, there is very limited progress in practice. Project and program managers are not usually trained on gender issues and only 51% of projects are evaluated against gender indicators.

## Belgian NGOs call on the Belgian government to:

- step up efforts to increase genuine aid so as to reach the 0.7% target in 2010;
- increase coherence among all policies and policy levels with an impact on international cooperation and focus on development goals;
- enhance transparency of development aid, and further engage NGOs and parliamentarians in debates on development cooperation;
- untie all its aid – even beyond the OECD DAC criteria;
- increase the amount of ODA earmarked for gender equality.

**Belgium's genuine and inflated aid**



Organisations consulted: 11.11.11 and CNCD: Flemish and French-speaking Platforms of development NGO's, Monde selon les femmes, Nederlanstalige Vrouwenraad, Commission Femmes et développement.