

"It is clear that the international commitment to development must be stepped up if we are to reach the MDGs. Ireland is doing its part by scaling up our aid volume and by focusing on the social sectors which have most impact on poverty. But we will also advocate for greater international engagement for development and lend our support to any new initiatives to re-build momentum including within the EU."

Minister of State for Overseas Development, Michael Kitt, April 2008.



Ireland

Has Ireland established a timetable to reach the target of 0.7% by 2012? YES

Will Ireland meet the UN target of 0.7% of GNI in 2012 without inflating its aid? NGO prediction: LIKELY

In 2007, Ireland spent 0.54% of GNI on ODA, ahead of the target for the year (0.5%) and maintaining progress towards its 2010 and 2012 commitments of 0.6% and 0.7% respectively. Irish overseas aid had jumped significantly from 2005 to 2006 to reach 0.54%, including a one-off contribution of €58.6 million towards multilateral debt relief: Ireland's recorded €869 million spend in 2007 maintained that 0.54% without the inclusion of any sizeable debt figure, suggesting that Ireland is on track to reach its 2010 target.

• Aid quality

Ireland's aid continues to focus on poverty reduction and is primarily directed towards Least Developed Countries. Irish Aid capacity issues are currently subject to a management review: it is hoped that this will provide the resources needed to manage the expanding programme. In 2007, Ireland established a new inter-departmental committee to enhance Policy Coherence for Development.

Transparency of Irish government aid is generally good: annual reports are widely available and certain evaluation reports are posted on the internet, along with Country Strategy Papers. Some documents can also be accessed in a new public information centre in Dublin. There is scope, however, for greater detail and transparency of data reporting, as well as improved reporting on impact.

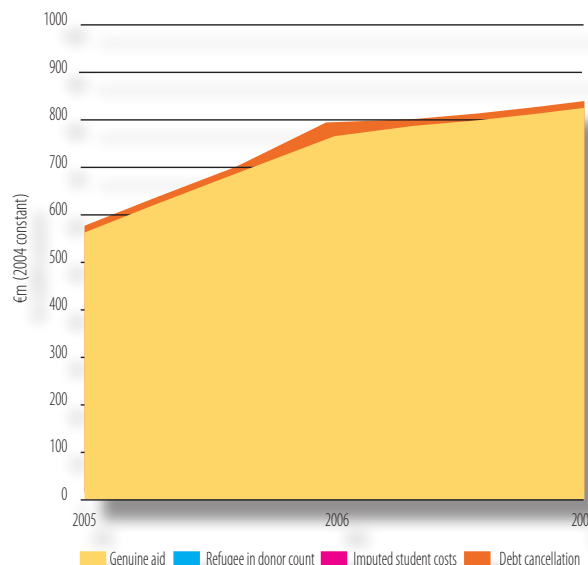
Ireland's position on conditionality is ambiguous: Irish Aid does not apply economic policy conditionality in its development programme countries, but supports it through its funding for International Financial Institutions, which do impose economic policy conditionality.

Irish Aid has developed a gender strategy in development cooperation, gender equality has been mainstreamed as one of four priority cross-cutting issues, and dedicated staff are now in place. Irish Aid has also been active in promoting gender as a key area of concern within the Paris Declaration process and in addressing gender-based violence. However, data are not readily available about the volume of funds for gender programming or their impact. Figures made available for this report, but not captured in annual reports, suggest that approximately €7 million was spent on specific gender equality initiatives in 2007, though the actual amount spent is likely to be higher.

Irish NGOs urge their government to:

- legislate for a minimum of 0.7% ODA/GNI in 2012 and thereafter. Funding provided for debt cancellation should be additional to the 0.7%;
- improve its reporting on the scale, approach and impact of the Irish development cooperation programme, including in relation to gender equality;
- provide sufficient resources, especially staff levels, to sustain the quality of Irish development cooperation; and proactively enhance Policy Coherence for Development;
- ensure that Ireland does not support economic policy conditionality;
- play a strong role at EU level in defence of principled development policies and practices.

Ireland's genuine and inflated aid



Organisations consulted: The 37 Dóchas members (see www.dochas.ie), Debt and Development Coalition Ireland and Banúlacht (Women in Ireland for Development).