

**Policy Objective :** To ensure that Ireland plays an active and effective part in promoting genuine development in the Global South and to ensure that all of Ireland’s policies are consistent with such development.

### The present situation

#### On Governance

A significant review of Ireland’s foreign policy was published in January 2015<sup>1</sup>. This had a welcome emphasis on human rights and governance. The report emphasises “Good governance and accountability are vital for the realisation of human rights, and key to addressing inequality, discrimination and exclusion which lie at the core of poverty. We will continue to focus on building effective institutions and policies as well as encouraging popular participation in the democratic process” (The Global Island p.40).

Governance is the institutional context within which rights are achieved or denied. It is about how power and authority are exercised in the management of the affairs and resources of a country. *Social Justice Ireland* welcomes this emphasis on good governance, both at home and abroad, and urges the Irish Government to ensure such guiding principles are maintained in all its development projects.

#### On Overseas Development Assistance (ODA)

Ireland’s Policy for International Development, entitled *One World, One Future*, published in 2013 reiterated the often-repeated commitment to achieve the target of 0.7 per cent of Gross National Product allocated to international development cooperation. It went on to state that: ‘Recognising the present economic difficulties, the Government will endeavour to maintain aid expenditure at current levels, while moving towards the 0.7 per cent target’ (p3). *Social Justice Ireland* welcomed this

commitment but is disappointed that a date by which this target would be met has not been set.

As Table 1 shows, over time Ireland achieved sizeable increases in its ODA allocation. In 2006 a total of €814m (0.53 per cent of GNP) was allocated to ODA – reaching the interim target set by the Government. Budget 2008 further increased the ODA budget to reach €920.7m (0.59 per cent of GNP). However, since then the ODA budget has been a focus of government cuts and, by 2015, had fallen by €318m – more than 34 per cent. There was a welcome increase in Budget 2016 but this simply

Table 1: Ireland’s net overseas development assistance, 2005-2014		
Year	€m’s	% of GNP
2005	578.5	0.43
2006	814.0	0.53
2007	870.9	0.53
2008	920.7	0.59
2009	722.2	0.55
2010	675.8	0.53
2011	657.0	0.50
2012	628.9	0.47
2013	637.1	0.46
2014	601.6	0.39
2015	602.0	0.34*
2016	641.0	0.34*

Source: Irish Aid (2012:73) and various Budget documents. \*Estimated

Figure based on adjusted estimates of GDP and GNI as set out by Eurostat during 2015.

<sup>1</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs, (2015) *The Global Island: Ireland’s Foreign Policy for a Changing World*. Dublin: Stationery Office

maintained the ODA level at 0.34% of GNP.

The ODA budget is an allocation to the poorest people on the planet and Ireland should now follow the good example of several other EU countries, including the UK and raise ODA to the UN target of 0.7% by 2021.

### *On The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*

In 2015 the United Nations adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as the core structure for policy development across the planet until 2030. Ireland played a major part in the development of these goals and should now move on to being a leader in advocating their implementation and setting a good example by incorporating them into Ireland's policy process.

A key issue that Ireland should focus on now is how progress on these and all other policy issues should be measured. Growth in GDP is not a good measure of real progress. Creating a sustainable Ireland and a sustainable world requires the development of new indicators that measure environmental, economic and social sustainability as well as happiness and well-being. Adopting such progress indicators should be a policy priority for government in the period immediately ahead.

### *On Climate Justice*

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges this planet has ever faced. A pathway for addressing this was set out at COP21 in Paris in December 2015. This agreement itself is not a solution to climate change, nor does it provide the full details of how people will be protected from the impacts of climate change, particularly those in developing countries. The focus on financial support for developing countries impacted by climate change in the text is positive. However the absence of human rights protection and climate justice from the agreement, and the absence of specific details as to how the long-term goals of reducing emissions are going to be met, are weaknesses.

Ireland should now commit to placing climate justice at the heart of its policy development process and to

ensuring its policies in all areas are consistent with this approach.

## **7 things Government can do**

1. Renew its commitment to meet the United Nations target of contributing 0.7 per cent of GNP to Overseas Development Assistance (ODA). Recognising that the deadline of 2015 has been missed, the new target date should be 2021 and a clear pathway should be set out to achieve this target.
2. Take a far more proactive stance at government level on ensuring that Irish and EU policies towards countries in the South are just. Ensure that Irish businesses operating in developing countries - in particular Irish Aid country partners - are subject to proper scrutiny and engage in sustainable development practices.
3. Continue to support the international campaign for the liberation of the poorest nations from the burden of unpayable debt, and take steps to ensure that further progress is made on this issue.
4. Play a leading role in promoting the SDGs and agree new progress indicators.
5. Put climate justice at the core of decision-making and ensure that all policies developed in Ireland are consistent with the targets set out in the agreement reached at COP21 in December 2015.
6. Work for changes in the existing international trading regimes, to encourage fairer and more sustainable forms of trade. In particular, resource the development of Ireland's policies in the WTO to ensure that this goal is pursued.
7. Take a leadership position within European and international arenas to encourage other states to fund programmes and research aimed at resolving the AIDS/HIV crisis.