

13.

THE GLOBAL SOUTH

CORE POLICY OBJECTIVE: THE GLOBAL SOUTH

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 theme of inequality dominated 2014, both in Ireland and abroad. Thomas Piketty's *Capital* proved a bestselling hit, provoking heated debates across political divides and publications across the globe as it detailed the problematic rise in inequality between the world's richest one per cent and the rest. In the months leading up to the World Economic Forum (WEF) in January 2015 in Davos, Switzerland, inequality was also a key theme for NGO Oxfam as it released a report entitled *Even it Up: Time to end extreme inequality* in October 2014 (and followed this up with a subsequent briefing paper, *Wealth: Having it all and wanting more*). Oxfam highlighted the startling fact that "in 2014, the richest 1 per cent of people in the world owned 48 per cent of global wealth, leaving just 52 per cent to be shared between the other 99 per cent of adults on the planet". By 2016, if present wealth share trends continue, "the top 1 per cent will have more wealth than the remaining 99 per cent of people in just two years". This theme was echoed at the organisation's Oxfam-Oxford Symposium in the week leading up to Davos, where Oxfam began its push for a global compact on taxation. In a seven-point plan, the NGO called for a new global approach to rein in inequality and tax avoidance:

- Clamp down on tax avoidance by corporations and rich individuals
- Invest in universal, free public services such as health and education
- Share the tax burden fairly, shifting taxation from labour and consumption towards capital and wealth
- Introduce minimum wages and move towards a living wage for all workers
- Introduce equal pay legislation and promote economic policies to give women a fair deal.

- Ensure adequate safety-nets for the poorest, including a minimum income guarantee
- Agree a global goal to tackle inequality 2015

(*Wealth: Having It All And Wanting More*, Oxfam Issue Briefing, January 2015, p.9-10).

The UN Human Development Report 2014 (UNHDR) released in July of last year echoes, in many respects, the Oxfam report and gives us a current snapshot of human development across the Globe at this time. The UN Report entitled *Sustaining Human Progress: Reducing Vulnerabilities and Building Resilience* offered a somewhat more optimistic note in certain areas, yet also noted worrying trends. Whilst the 2013 UN HDR Report pointed to positive (unpredicted) outcomes with forty developing countries having “greater HDI (Human Development Index) gains than would have been predicted given their situation in 1990” (UN HDR 2014, p.33), the 2014 report warns that “there is evidence that the overall rate of progress is slowing—and this is worrying.” (UN HDR 2014, p.33) Reflecting on welcome reductions in certain select inequality parameters, the report cautions that “Declines in inequality should be celebrated, but offsetting growing income disparities with progress in health is not enough. To tackle vulnerability, particularly among marginalized groups, and sustain recent achievements, reducing inequality in all dimensions of human development is crucial”.(UN HDR 2014 Summary, p.2) The key emphasis within the 2014 report rests on vulnerability and individuals ability to respond to the shocks and uncertainties of a globalised world, in terms of climatic, economic and political upheavals. Whilst greater numbers around the world are emerging from poverty, “more than 2.2 billion people are either near or living in multidimensional poverty.” (UN HDR 2014, p.3). As the recent outbreak of Ebola in West Africa attests, progress for some of the poorest nations can be easily eroded if safety nets and protective mechanisms- both at an institutional and social level- are weak or in some cases non-existent.

The reality of income inequality is graphically reported in both the Oxfam report and briefing paper. Promoting genuine development in the Global South is one of the key policy areas that must be addressed urgently as part of the Core Policy Framework we set out in Chapter 2.

The 2014 UN HDR notes that there are 1.2 billion people living on \$1.25 a day or less and 2.7 billion living on less than \$2.50 (HDR 2014, p.71). In a world with resources many times what is required to eliminate global poverty this situation is intolerable.

The 2014 United Nations Human Development Report gives an outline of the size of underdevelopment and inequality. Table 13.1 shows this outline.

Table13.1: United Nations development indicators by region and worldwide

Region	GNI per capita (US\$ PPP)*	Life Expectancy at Birth (yrs)	Adult Literacy %**
Least Developed Countries	2,126	61.5	59.3
Arab States	15,817	70.2	77.0
East Asia + Pacific	10,499	74.0	94.4
Europe + Central Asia	12,415	71.3	97.7
L. America + Caribbean	13,767	74.9	91.5
South Asia	5,195	67.2	62.9
Sub-Saharan Africa	3,152	56.8	58.9
Very High HDI [^]	40,046	80.2	n/a
Worldwide total	13,723	70.8	81.3

Source: UNDP (2014: 34, 163, 195)

Notes: * Gross National Income (GNI) Data adjusted for differences in purchasing power.

** Adult defined as those aged 15yrs and above.

[^]49 Countries including the OECD with very high human development indicators.

The comparable rates for Ireland are: GNI per capita: \$33,414; Life expectancy: 80.7; adult literacy: not available

Tables 13.1 and 13.2 show the sustained differences in the experiences of various regions in the world. These differences go beyond just income and are reflected in each of the indicators reported in both tables. Today, life expectancies are years higher in the richest countries than in Sub-Saharan Africa. Similarly, the UN reports that more than 1 in 3 Southern Asians and Sub-Saharan Africans are unable to read.

These phenomena are equally reflected in sizeable differences in income levels (GNI per person) and in the various mortality figures in table 13.2.. Table 13.2 shows that there are 389 deaths per 100,000 live births in Least Developed Countries as against 16 in OECD countries

Table 13.2: Maternal and Infant Mortality Rates

Region	Maternal Mortality Ratio#	Under-5yrs mortality rate*
Least Developed Countries	389	84
Arab States	164	37
East Asia + Pacific	72	21
Europe + Central Asia	31	23
L. America + Caribbean	74	19
South Asia	202	57
Sub-Saharan Africa	474	97
Very High HDI^	16	6
Worldwide total	145	47

Source: UNDP 2014 (175, 187)

Notes: Ratio of the number of maternal deaths to the number of live births expressed per 100,000 live births

^49 Countries including the OECD with very high human development indicators.

*number of deaths per 1,000 live births. Figures up to 2012.

The comparable rates for Ireland are: Maternal mortality: 2; Under 5 mortality: 6

The Human Development Report 2015 will be titled *Rethinking Work for Human Development*. The emphasis of the next Report will be to “zoom in on the fundamental question – how work can be rethought for human development” and will set about “rethinking the linkages between work and human development identifying the positive intrinsic relationship between work and human development...but also those situations where linkages are broken or eroded - child labour, human trafficking, etc.” (Selim Jahan, Director of the Human Development Report Office, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/rethinking-work-for-human-development>). The report will be released in October.

UN millennium development goals

The UN Millennium Declaration was adopted in 2000 at the largest-ever gathering of heads of state. It committed countries - both rich and poor - to doing all they can to eradicate poverty, promote human dignity and equality and achieve peace, democracy and environmental sustainability. World leaders promised to work together to meet concrete targets for advancing development and reducing poverty by 2015 or earlier. Emanating from the Millennium Declaration, a set of Millennium Development

Goals (MDGs) was agreed. These bind countries to do more in the attack on inadequate incomes, widespread hunger, gender inequality, environmental deterioration and lack of education, healthcare and clean water. They also include actions to reduce debt and increase aid, trade and technology transfers to poor countries. These goals and their related targets are listed in Annex 13.

Progress on the Millennium Development Goals has been mixed, with some countries outperforming others. As Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf noted in 2013, “Two years from the 2015 deadline, Africa’s progress on the Millennium Development Goals remains uneven. Remarkable advances have been made in some areas, such as net primary school enrolment, gender parity in primary education, the representation of women in decision-making, some reduction in poverty, immunization coverage, and stemming the spread of HIV/AIDS. Notwithstanding this progress, there is ample room for more good news. Some areas have been neglected when they should have been put upfront, for example malaria, the number one killer of children in sub-Saharan Africa and many other places in the world. Additionally, the goal for school enrolment did not take into account the need for quality education.” (UN HDR 2014, p.11). As noted in our previous annual Socio-Economic Review reports, many advances are at a national-level and not due to any particular regional co-operation or projects.

Critics of the MDGs argue that these goals were dictated by donors, written by donors, and made sense in the Aid Effectiveness agenda and process (Paris 2005 - Accra 2008 –(Busan 2011), rather than in the development agenda. As a consequence, there was very little ownership of the MDGs by development actors, very few countries attempted to localise them. In the years ahead a different approach is needed, one that engages the people who are meant to benefit from this process. It is also essential that the focus be on development that is sustainable (environmentally, economically and socially) and focused on all countries and not just the poorest.

As the MDGs timeline come to an end, a major focus of governments and NGOs is now on the nature of the post-2015 development agenda. This year will be crucial in assessing progress thus far and defining what next in the efforts to combat conflict, disease, inequality and poverty. The UN Rio+20 conference on Sustainable Development in 2012 began the process of determining the post-2015 developmental agenda. A series of high-level events are occurring in 2015 as governments and organisations come together to map the best way forward for the coming decades, including a Millennium Development Goals Report 2015 (July 2015) and a Special Summit on Sustainable Development (September 2015). Organisations such as ‘Beyond 2015’, representing 1,200 organisations in 140 countries, have come together to ensure the post-2015 Agenda is an inclusive and people-driven process, rather than externally dictated. They call upon the nations of the world to seize this unique opportunity to ensure “that a new paradigm based

on democracy and good governance, empowerment of the poorest and most marginalised, and strong citizen voices on social, environmental and economic justice, solidarity, common but differentiated responsibilities, and accountability of all development actors” (‘Inspiring and Aiming Higher Recommendations to the Post-2015 Political Declaration’, Beyond 2015, p.5).

Wars, inter-community disputes and the easy availability of arms increase vulnerability and instability for many communities. Scarcity of resources especially water, energy and land have become more acute and highlight the need for urgent action. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) estimates that such scarcity will lead to increased conflict and regional instability in many of the poorest parts of the world: “Climate change can indirectly increase risks of violent conflicts in the form of civil war and inter-group violence by amplifying well-documented drivers of these conflicts such as poverty and economic shocks. Multiple lines of evidence relate climate variability to these forms of conflict” (IPCC Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability, Summary for Policymakers, p.20). The overwhelming majority of violent conflicts are intra-state conflicts, their victims are mostly civilians. These conflicts are fought with small arms. The production and trade of these arms is the least transparent of all weapons systems. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) report that world military expenditure in 2012 is estimated to have been \$1,756 billion or \$249 for each person. Nearly three-quarters of the companies in the Top 100 for 2012 are headquartered in North America or Western Europe, and they account for 87 per cent of the total arms sales. Ireland as a neutral country should have a role in researching, challenging and advocating for tight controls in the production and distribution of these weapons.

A number of Irish Aid’s partner countries neighbour nations currently mired in conflict, such as Ethiopia (which shares a border with South Sudan and Somalia) and Uganda (which shares a border with Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan). Ireland should ensure its country offices and overseas programs engage in mediation efforts where possible and promote positive reconciliation efforts amongst civil society groups. Lessons learned from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade’s (DFAT) Reconciliation Fund projects- fostering peace and community interaction within Northern Ireland, as well as between communities in Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland and Britain, would allow the DFAT to offer positive insights on reconciliation and cross-border co-operation in other settings.

Climate change will affect all citizens of the world, yet as countless reports indicate those from poorer nations will suffer most. While Irish citizens have not been insulated from the effects of climate change, the consequences are much more acute for those living in developing countries. The effects of climate change have increased the vulnerability of many communities leading to enforced migration, internal displacement, poverty and hunger. Food production is a huge challenge for

communities constantly forced to move. An increasingly important issue for developing nations is adaptation strategies to combat the severe effects of Climate Change. As a World Bank report in 2009 indicated, “the major challenge is to identify actions that will support and/or accelerate ongoing development efforts while making them more resilient to climatic risks” (*Making Development Climate Resilient: a World Bank Strategy for Sub-Saharan Africa*, 2009, p.xvi). The *African Union Common African Position (Cap) On The Post- 2015 Development Agenda* (2014) stressed that African nations “recognize that adaptation to the phenomenon represents an immediate and urgent global priority” (p.13), however research by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN) noted the worrying situation that many African countries are not preparing adequately for the effects of Climate Change. In a range of case studies- looking at Malawi, Rwanda and Zambia, and a combined urban case study in Accra, Ghana and Maputo, Mozambique, the study showed a lack of integrating thinking on Climate Change and “identified very few long-term decision-making processes that currently use climate information to inform the planning and delivery of investments” (*Promoting the use of climate information to achieve long-term development objectives in sub-Saharan Africa: Results from the Future Climate For Africa scoping phase*, 2015, p.15).

The most recent Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report in 2014 noted that “African ecosystems are already being affected by climate change, and future impacts are expected to be substantial” (IPCC 5th Report, 2014, p.1022). The majority of Irish ODA is focused on African countries and the Irish Government must ensure Irish Aid engages and fosters the use of climate change planning in future planning. Ireland should be a world leader in combating climate change and it should lead the EU 2020 Strategy on climate change and sustainability. However the Government’s own commitment to Climate Change has been called into question by the draft Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Bill 2015. The Bill’s lack of firm commitments on CO₂ emission reductions has seen it criticised by opposition parties and a host of NGOs. It is imperative the richer nations of the world take the lead on Climate Change for the simple reality that “The richest seven percent of world’s population (equal to half a billion people) are responsible for 50 percent of global CO₂ emissions; whereas the poorest 50 percent emit only seven percent of worldwide emissions” (*Even it Up*, Oxfam, 2014, p.41). (A fuller treatment of this issue is to be found in chapter 11).

In February 2015, world leaders gathered in Geneva to prepare a draft text to set the basis for a global agreement in Paris in November 2015. Although 200 countries agreed to an 86-page draft agreement, the document (http://unfccc.int/files/bodies/awg/application/pdf/negotiating_text_12022015@2200.pdf, accessed 14 Feb. 2015) incorporated conflicting approaches to combat Climate Change and overall withheld any firm commitments on cutting emissions (‘Geneva talks: countries agree draft text for deal to fight climate change’, *The Guardian*, 13 February 2015).

The Irish Government should work within the EU and UN for a broad-based, inclusive agreement at Paris later this year, one that reflects the Global nature of Climate Change and the responsibility of richest nations to contribute most to combat the dangerous effects of increased emissions.

Human Rights and Governance.

Social Justice Ireland is a signatory of the *Galway Platform on Human Rights in Irish Foreign Policy*. This document reflects the views of many groups and academics and is a comprehensive contribution to development policy.

Social Justice Ireland welcomed the ‘Review of Ireland’s Foreign Policy and External Relations’ and the release of *The Global Island* in January 2015 by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. In our submission to the Review, we noted the importance of articulating a vision that is inspirational, attractive and achievable and how this vision can be promoted at home and abroad. We urged that a major focus of this review be on human rights and governance.

The Review is welcome in many respects, offering a revised outlook of Ireland’s foreign policy in the years ahead. This is especially important given the decline in ODA contribution as a percentage of GDP and the cuts to Irish Aid’s budget in recent years. The Review puts forward a vision of Ireland’s Foreign Policy under five interrelated themes: ‘Our People’, ‘Our Values’, ‘Our Prosperity’, ‘Our Place in Europe’, ‘Our Influence’. Whilst *The Global Island* places a great deal of importance on Human Rights obligations, it is vaguer on specific incorporation of Human Rights criteria throughout DFAT operations- this should be spelled out clearly in all future policy documents and country-specific projects.

In order to ensure good governance strong independent civil society organisations are necessary to articulate the views of the people, challenge injustices, and highlight social exclusion. The Irish Aid Report 2014 emphasises the Irish Government’s commitment to foster civil society in host countries and Ireland should continue to ensure a space and support for a vibrant promotion of human rights and democratic participation across the globe. This is especially important given some of Ireland’s key partner countries- including Ethiopia and Uganda- have a record of stifling democratic opposition and civil society activism.

Trade and debt

The fact that the current inequality between rich and poor regions of the world persists is largely attributable to unfair trade practices and to the backlog of unpayable debt owed by the countries of the South to other governments, to the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and to commercial banks.

The effect of trade barriers cannot be overstated; by limiting or eliminating access to potential markets the Western world is denying poor countries substantial income. In 2002 at the UN Conference on Financing and Development Michael Moore, the President of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), stated that the complete abolition of trade barriers could ‘boost global income by \$2.8 trillion and lift 320 million people out of poverty by 2015’.

Supporting developing countries to develop and implement just taxation systems would give a huge boost to local social and economic activity. *Social Justice Ireland* notes the initiatives outlined in the 2013 Irish Aid Report, to help developing countries to raise their own revenue and the reiteration of this in the *Global Island* (p.41). We urge Government to learn from and expand these programmes. We support Oxfam’s call for a Global Compact on Taxation. Whilst some critics argue that such a deal may be difficult to achieve, as our previous Socio-Economic Review reports have noted the losses that developing countries incur due to tax evasion is sizeable and galling. The Human Development Report 2014 noted that “For the least developed countries illicit financial flows increased from \$9.7 billion in 1990 to \$26.3 billion in 2008, with 79 percent of this due to trade mispricing. To put this in context, for every dollar of official development assistance that the least developed countries received, an average of 60 cents left in illicit flows between 1990 and 2008” (HDR, 2014, p.119).

Social Justice Ireland also supports the introduction of a financial transaction tax (FTT) which it sees as progressive since it is designed to target only those profiting from speculation. It is clear that all countries would gain from trade reform.

The high levels of debt experienced by Third World countries have disastrous consequences for the populations of these indebted countries. Governments that are obliged to dedicate large percentages of their country’s GDP to debt repayments cannot afford to pay for health and educational programmes for their people. Ellmers & Hulova (2013) estimate that the external debt of countries of the global South has doubled over the past decade to reach \$4.5 trillion. Debt and Development Coalition estimate that revenue lost from global South countries through illicit capital flight is at €660 - €870 billion per year. It is not possible for these countries to develop the kind of healthy economies that would facilitate debt repayment when millions of their people are being denied basic healthcare and education and are either unemployed or earn wages so low that they can barely survive.

The debt relief initiatives of the past 10 years have been very welcome. These initiatives need to be further developed as there is growing concern that the debts of the poorest countries are beginning to rise again. It is now important that Ireland campaign on the international stage to reduce the debt burden on poor countries. Given Ireland’s current economic circumstances, the Irish population now has a greater appreciation of the implications of these debts and the merit in having them reduced.

International Development post 2015

2015 is the European Year for Development (EYD). Within the EU, this means development issues are subject to increased awareness and publicity campaigns for 2015. In planning for the post-2015 development agenda, *Social Justice Ireland* believes that the international community needs to play an active role in developing the proposed UN Sustainable Development Goals and in assisting less developed countries achieve their potential. *Social Justice Ireland* welcomed the Government's publication of *One World, One Future: Ireland's Policy for International Development* (2013) with its overall vision to work for "A sustainable and just world where people are empowered to overcome poverty and hunger and fully realise their rights and potential". The key areas highlighted in this document are a basis for an integrated framework for global development post-2015. These included the three goals of Reduced Hunger, Stronger Resilience; Better Governance, Human Rights and Accountability and Sustainable Inclusive Economic Growth; with the six priority areas for action of Global hunger; Fragile states; Climate change and development; Trade and economic growth; Essential services and; Human rights and accountability (*ibid*, p.2.).

In the development of this framework we recommend the following

- Priorities should be shaped by the views of those on the ground. People living in poverty should be supported in an appropriate manner so they can participate fully in processes that are influencing the post 2015 framework. This principle should also apply to goal setting, targets, monitoring and evaluation processes. Too often policies are detached from the communities they are meant to be serving.
- As spelled out in the *Galway Platform on Human Rights in Irish Foreign Policy*, the framework should affirm the full set of social, economic, cultural, civil and political rights of all people everywhere. Goals and targets (global and national) should be linked to human rights obligations.
- Equality should be mainstreamed across all goals and targets. Groups experiencing discrimination should be enabled to actively participate in identifying appropriate indicators to provide disaggregated data to assess progress.
- Establish effective accountability mechanisms for the implementation of the post-2015 framework. The mechanisms should operate at local, national and global levels. Involve people living in poverty and marginalisation in these evaluations.
- Sustainability should be the core concept around which international development post 2015 is organised. This should include environmental, economic and social sustainability.

One of the main outcomes of the UN Rio+20 Conference was the agreement by member States to establish a process to develop sustainable development goals. It is envisioned that all member states would contribute to and 'buy in' to these goals. In early 2013 the UN General Assembly established the Open Working Group to establish a process to draft these goals. The draft Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has been published. (A copy of these draft goals is included in Annex 13). It is expected that these goals will be adopted by the UN Summit when it meets in late September 2015. The draft SDGs are very general and aspirational. More work is needed on the draft. In particular, it will be important that budget lines, structures and measurements of progress are put in place to achieve these goals.

Ireland's commitment to ODA

As noted above, Ireland's Foreign Policy was subject to a significant review which resulted in the January 2015 publication of *The Global Island: Ireland's Foreign Policy for a Changing World*. The publication set out to offer the latest comprehensive outline of Irish Foreign policy since the 1996 White Paper *Challenges and Opportunities Abroad* (*The Global Island*, Foreword, p.1).

Social Justice Ireland welcomes the emphasis on Human Rights and Governance in this review, reflecting priorities as set out by the Galway Platform for Human Rights in Irish Foreign Policy in December 2013 (of which *Social Justice Ireland* is a signatory). 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.

Ireland's Policy for International Development, *One World, One Future*, published in 2013 reiterated the Programme for Government's commitment to achieve the target of 0.7 per cent of Gross National Income 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 13.3 shows, over time Ireland had achieved sizeable increases in our 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 (0.6 per cent of GNP). However, since then the ODA budget has been a focus of government cuts and has fallen by €318m – more than 34 per cent.

Table 13.3: Ireland’s net overseas development assistance, 2005-2014

Year	€m’s	% of GNP
2005	578.5	0.42
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	0.43
2015	602	0.38*

Source: Irish Aid (2012:73) and various Budget Documents.

Figures based on adjusted figure of GDP and GNI as introduced earlier this year by Eurostat.

The Government has been silent on this 0.7 per cent target in this new Foreign Policy review. The ODA budget was cut every year between 2006-2014 both in terms of allocation and as a percentage of GNP (Table 13.3). This is an allocation to the poorest people on the planet and should have been given first priority. Ahead of Budget 2015, *Social Justice Ireland* called for an increase of €60 million in the ODA budget to reach 0.45 per cent of GDP. However, Budget 2015 saw ODA remain at 2014 levels meaning the ODA allocation will fall below 0.4 per cent of GDP for the first time in 10 years (‘Questions over Aid commitments’, *Irish Examiner*, Oct. 15, 2014). We urge Government to halt this slide and begin the process of increasing the allocation to reach the 0.7 per cent of GNP target. An Ipsos MRBI poll in July 2014 found that over 77 per cent of respondents were in favour of Government meeting its commitment of providing over 0.7 per cent of GDP in ODA. Opinion

polls have consistently shown public support for high levels of ODA and Government meeting its UN obligation in this regard.

Rebuilding our commitment to ODA and honouring the UN target should be important policy paths for Ireland to pursue in the years to come. Not only would its achievement be a major success for government, and an important element in the delivery of promises made but it would also be of significance internationally. Ireland's success would not only provide additional assistance to needy countries but would also provide leadership to those other European countries who do not meet the target. The DFAT and the Irish Government regularly cite the positive assessment international bodies give of Irish overseas aid. The OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Peer Review of Ireland noted how Ireland's "institutional structures enable it to deliver co-ordinated, quality development co-operation and to be a pragmatic and flexible partner" (*OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews: Ireland 2014*, p. 17). However, if ODA contributions continue to decline aid programs- and poor communities in host countries- will suffer. As the Dóchas 2015 budget submission stated: "The 0.7 per cent target is based on a percentage, meaning that the growth or shrinkage of a country's economy should not affect its progress towards the target. This in-built mechanism ensures fairness and demonstrates the 0.7 per cent target is not a matter of economic prosperity but a direct indicator of a county's commitment to development" (Dóchas Budget 2015 Submission to the Minister for Finance, "Demonstrating Ireland's Commitment to Development Cooperation", Summary). Despite the challenges in Ireland at present, we believe that we should care for those less well-off particularly the world's poorest people.

HIV/AIDS

Progress against the spread of HIV/AIDS has been one of the more notable successes of the MDGs. Target seven of the Goals committed the international community to have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS'. In July 2014, UN AIDS released its *Gap Report* indicating the progress thus far in combating HIV/AIDS and where further work needs to be done. As the Report notes, much progress has been made in the past decade:

- Nearly 12.9 million people were receiving antiretroviral therapy globally at the end of 2013. Of these 12.9 million people, 5.6 million were added since 2010 (p.14).
- At the end of 2013, US\$ 19.1 billion was being invested annually in the AIDS response in low- and middle-income countries (p.16)
- There has been notable progress in Sub-Saharan Africa, the region most affected by HIV/AIDS, with significant declines in new infections. New HIV infections have dropped 33 per cent (amongst all age groups) between 2005 and 2013 and there has been a 19 per cent reduction in new infections since 2010 (p.30).

Despite these gains, deficiencies do remain, including:

- New infections are declining, but they still remain very high. 0.8 per cent of adults aged 15–49 years worldwide are living with HIV (p.17).
- New infections in eastern Europe and central Asia started increasing in the late 2000s and the region now has 0.6 per cent of adults living with HIV.
- Rising levels of new infections in the Middle East and North Africa are a worrying development. Numbers of those infected has increased 31 per cent since 2001, from 19,000 to 25,000 (p.19).
- Young women and adolescent girls are disproportionately vulnerable and at high risk of infection. 15 per cent of all women living with HIV aged 15 years or older are young women 15–24 years old (p.20)

In September 2014, UN AIDS released a report *Fast-Track - Ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030*. The ambitious goals including a commitment to 90-90-90 by 2020, meaning:

- 90 per cent of people living with HIV being aware of their HIV status, 90 per cent of people who know their status receiving treatment and 90 per cent of people on HIV treatment having a suppressed viral load so their immune system remains strong and they are no longer infectious. This would mean 500,000 new adult infections by 2020 (p.10).
- By 2030, the goal is to further increase coverage to 95-95-95 with a reduction to 200,000 new adult infections. (p.10-11).

Following on from this ambitious report, Mayors from cities across the world came together to reiterate these goals and sign the Paris Declaration on December 1, 2014, representing a new commitment on the part of world leaders to combat the disease. They committed themselves to “Support a greater involvement of people living with HIV/AIDS through an initiative to strengthen the capacity and coordination of networks of people living with HIV/AIDS and community-based organizations. By ensuring their full involvement in our common response to the pandemic at all national, regional and global levels, this initiative will, in particular, stimulate the creation of supportive political, legal and social environments”.

The international community must take its commitment seriously and act with urgency. Despite our difficulties *Social Justice Ireland* urges Government to meet its commitments in this area and ensure Ireland plays a key role internationally in responding to this crisis.

Key Policy Priorities

- The Irish Government should renew its commitment to meet the United Nations target of contributing 0.7 per cent of GNP to Overseas Development Assistance. Recognising that the deadline of 2015 will be missed, *Social Justice Ireland* proposes that the new date should be 2020 and a clear pathway should be set out to achieve this.
- 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.
- Continue to support the international campaign for the liberation of the poorest nations from the burden of the backlog of unpayable debt and take steps to ensure that further progress is made on this issue.
- Ireland should play a prominent role in the development of Sustainable Development Goals for the planet and, within these, maintain the focus on the issues raised earlier in this chapter.
- Work for changes in the existing international trading regimes, to encourage fairer and sustainable forms of trade. In particular, resource the development of Ireland's policies in the WTO to ensure that this goal is pursued.
- Ensure that the government takes a leadership position within the European and international arenas to encourage other states to fund programmes and research aimed at resolving the AIDS/HIV crisis.