

# Act Now on 2015

Deliver Ireland's Aid Promise

Annual Report 2010

**This report outlines the activities, achievements and challenges associated with the Act Now on 2015 campaign in 2010. We invite the campaign's member organisations to reflect on their own involvement and to suggest improvements as the campaign moves forward into 2011.**

The Act Now on 2015 Campaign was launched at the Dóchas AGM on 23 April, with the support of 65 Irish anti-poverty organisations. It represents the continuation and rebranding of the We Don't Care Less Campaign which had been launched a year earlier in response to a series of deep cuts to Ireland's overseas aid budget.

At its launch, member organisations were asked to appoint a contact person and to make commitments to contribute to specific aspects of the campaign. A campaign coordination group and communications group were formed, and a campaign coordinator was appointed. The campaign was coordinated by Dóchas through these bodies, and executed by its member organisations.

## **Objectives of the campaign**

The primary aims of the campaign were –

- Binding annual targets for spending on ODA to deliver a minimum of 0.7% by 2015
- Pressure by Ireland at EU level to agree a further set of ambitious collective and individual targets between now and 2015 to monitor progress towards achievement of the 0.7% target by all EU Member States. In calculating these new targets, the current 2010 EU interim target was used as a baseline
- Legislation that ensures more predictable allocations in ODA spending, in place by the earliest date possible in order to guarantee Ireland's aid commitment.

## Activities

### Political Lobby:

The achievement of these goals meant influencing a number of key decision-makers at Cabinet level, as well as senior members of Opposition parties.

The campaign worked to influence these decision-makers through direct face-to-face and phone meetings with representatives of member organisations, through parliamentary questions in the Dáil and Seanad, through the media and by mobilising the supporter bases of member organisations and the wider public to contact their TDs.

The main lobbying activities were meetings with TDs, a postcard campaign, an Oireachtas briefing and emails and phone calls to TDs. A key aim of the campaign was to engage with ministers at constituency level, and the campaign worked through organisations with connections to key constituencies. Similarly, when organising meetings with TDs, the campaign coordination group mapped which member organisations had the best contacts with political leaders and allocated responsibilities accordingly.

In this context, the campaign –

- Set up an email facility on [www.actnow2015.ie](http://www.actnow2015.ie) to allow supporters to email their TDs, with new emails focusing on the UN MDG Summit and the Budget. Over 4,000 emails were sent using this facility, and the majority of people who used it joined the Act Now email list.
- Organised a briefing meeting for TDs and Senators in November. This event was attended by 15 TDs and 5 Senators, including the Minister of State for Overseas Development. They were presented with a summary of the Dóchas budget submission and stories of impact, and asked to contact their party leader and to bring their influence to bear on Budget 2011 in order to ensure that the ODA budget was not cut further. This event was attended by 27 representatives of NGOs.
- Organised a number of formal and informal meetings with key Government and opposition decision-makers from all parties in the Oireachtas.
- Arranged meetings between TDs and CEOs of member organisations, focusing on members of the Cabinet.
- Organised teams of volunteers around the country to collect signatures on giant postcards to the Taoiseach and Minister for Foreign Affairs. These postcards were handed over to a government representative by campaign supporters and former Ireland rugby internationals.
- Organised Phone Friday in November, which called on supporters to phone their TDs.
- Called on AWEPA to write a letter to the Irish Times. This letter was signed by an all-party group of 27 TDs and 5 Senators.
- Distributed 15,000 campaign leaflets to member organisations and at campaign events.

- Prepared a formal Pre-Budget Submission and delivered it to the Government, urging Ministers to use Budget 2011 to demonstrate visible progress towards the 0.7% target, and to outline annual targets towards 0.7% within the four-year budgetary framework.
- Made a formal submission to the Departmental Strategy of the Department of Finance 2011 - 2013.

#### Coordination of Communications:

The campaign worked to develop and disseminate clear, shared messages that were repeated and advanced at many levels. From the outset the campaign decided on the following core messages –

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. “0.7% by 2015 at the latest” – starting now!</li> <li>2. 2010 is the year of the MDGs, we need an action plan!</li> </ol> |
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The name ‘Act Now on 2015’ was chosen to convey the importance of the 2015 target, and the need for action to be taken immediately to ensure that this target is reached.

These were supported by four secondary messages –

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Aid works – Aid from Ireland helps fight global poverty.</li> <li>2. Aid is affordable – It is only 70 cent in every 100 Euro.</li> <li>3. Ireland’s role in the world – We need the world, and we need to engage with the world.</li> <li>4. Aid is in Ireland’s interest.</li> </ol> |
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Our strategy was to convey these messages through a wide range of media with the ultimate intention of reaching and influencing key decision-makers.

In this context, during the campaign we:

- Sent a Messaging Toolkit to all member organisations and organised an ODA workshop in July which included a discussion on campaign messages and an explanation of the communications toolkit.
- Reconstituted the We Do Care Communications Group, and appointed a communications expert to the Campaign Coordination Group.
- Communicated regularly with member organisations and advised them on messaging, including drafting newsletter articles and other material for their external communications.
- Communicated with members and supporters through Facebook, Twitter and regular email updates on the progress of the campaign. The facebook page relaunched in June and attracted over 900 fans.
- Launched an Act Now on 2015 Website through which supporters could learn about the campaign and take action.
- Hung a large banner on Liberty Hall before and during the MDG Summit with the message ‘Aid From Ireland Saves Lives and Builds Futures: Take Action to Keep Ireland’s Aid Promise’.

- Submitted articles and letters to the editors of national and local newspapers, and encouraged our supporters to do the same.

The media campaign resulted in articles in the Irish Times (5), Irish Examiner (2), and Sunday Business Post, and pieces on Newstalk, Radio na Life and UTV Radio and Television. A focus on local and specialist media resulted in articles in Metro Éireann, the Clare Herald, InTouch (2), the Dun Laoghaire Informer and Le Chéile.

#### Member Activities:

Member organisations were asked to independently organise campaign activities, with the support of the campaign team.

These events included –

- Comhlámh organised a debate on the motion ‘We Can’t Afford Aid in Times of Crisis’.
- VSI organised a walk for returned volunteers in solidarity with the campaign.
- Habitat for Humanity Ireland collected signatures for the campaign at their annual volunteer event.
- Concern set up a letter-writing station in their office for staff to write to their TDs.
- Misean Cara distributed campaign leaflets at their AGM.
- Self Help Africa , Comhlámh, Christian Aid and Trócaire promoted the campaign at the Dun Laoghaire Festival of World Cultures.
- Trócaire wrote to the heads of the EU and IMF teams during the bailout negotiations, and organised a street action with giant postcards that were delivered to John Gormley and Dan Boyle.
- SARI organised two Act Now teams in campaign t-shirts at their Soccer Fest.
- IDEA organised a briefing workshop for the communications staff of member organisations.
- Suas and Concern staff and volunteers photographed themselves wearing Act Now t-shirts overseas.

Many member organizations contributed to the campaign by publicising it through their newsletters and social media, by including the campaign logo and a link to [actnow2015.ie](http://actnow2015.ie) on the front page of their websites and by calling on their staff and supporters to take action.

#### **Member Organisations:**

- ActionAid Ireland
- Afri
- Africa Centre
- Age Action Ireland
- Aidlink

- Amawele
- Amnesty International Ireland
- A-Z Children's Charity
- Bóthar
- Camara
- Centre for Global Education
- Childfund Ireland
- Children in Crossfire
- Christian Aid Ireland
- CBM Ireland
- Church Missionary Society Ireland (CMSI)
- Comhlámh
- Concern Worldwide
- Debt and Development Coalition
- Development Perspectives
- Dóchas
- ElectricAid
- Foundation Nepal
- Friends of Londiani
- Frontline Defenders
- Galway One World Centre (GOWC)
- Gorta
- Habitat for Humanity Ireland
- Hope Foundation
- Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU)
- Irish Council for International Students (ICOS)
- Irish Development Education Association (IDEA)
- Irish Family Planning Association (IFPA) (IFPA)
- Irish League of Credit Unions Foundation (ILCUF)
- Irish Missionary Union (IMU)
- Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO)
- Irish Red Cross
- International Service Ireland (ISI)
- Just Forests
- Kerry Action for Development Education (KADE)
- Kimmage DSC
- Link Community Development
- Misean Cara
- National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCi)
- National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI)
- Niall Mellon Township Trust
- Oxfam Ireland
- Plan Ireland
- Progressio
- Sierra Leone Ireland Partnership
- Sightsavers International Ireland
- Skillshare International Ireland
- Social Justice Ireland
- Sports Against Racism Ireland (SARI)
- Suas Educational Development
- Tearfund

- The One Foundation
- The SCOOP Foundation
- The Society of St. Vincent De Paul, Ireland
- Transparency International Ireland
- Trócaire
- Value Added in Africa
- Viatores Christi
- Vita
- Voluntary Service International (VSI)
- Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO)
- Volunteer Missionary Movement (VMM)
- War on Want Northern Ireland
- World Vision Ireland